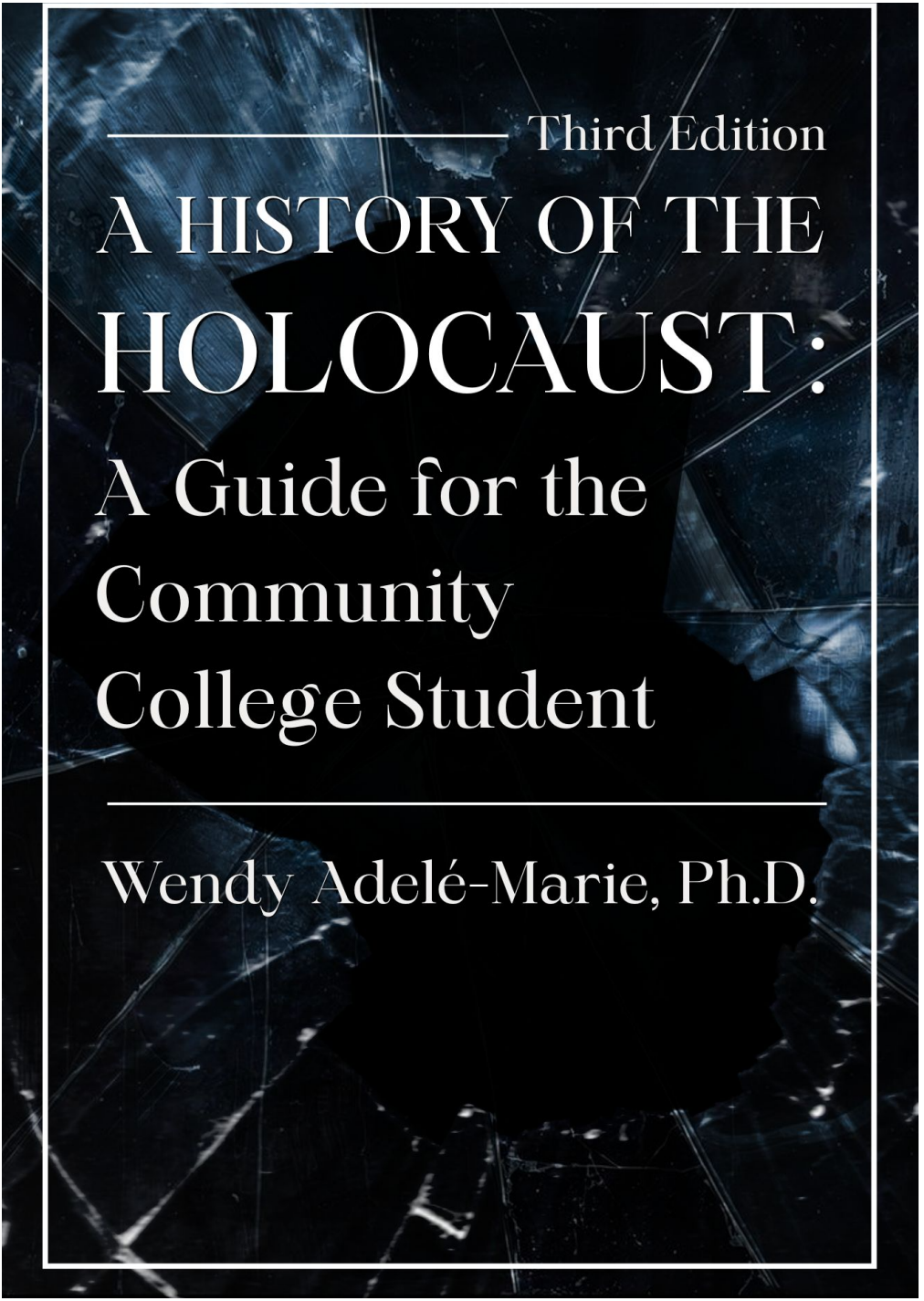
Third Edition
A HISTORY OF THE HOLOCAUST:
A Guide for the Community College Student
Wendy Adelé-Marie, Ph.D.

# A HISTORY OF THE HOLOCAUST: A GUIDE FOR THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT: THE THIRD EDITION

WENDY ADELÉ-MARIE, PH.D.

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## Dedications

The textbook honors Magda Brown, Yakov Zakon, Philip Drell, and Ava Kadishson Schieber. I miss you all very much.
It was Ava who once told me to always dance through the raindrops. Keep dancing in heaven, Ava.

The entire project is mainly dedicated to Leon Stein, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, Roosevelt University, whose guidance and instruction made my work as a Holocaust scholar and professor possible. You believed in me first as an undergraduate, then as a graduate student, and then as a professor. Thank you for your training and the gift of your knowledge and instruction in Holocaust and genocide studies. I learned from the very best.

The book is dedicated to the other survivors that I have had the honor of knowing throughout my life. Thank you all for making this work possible. To Diana, when I was a tiny girl, you gave me a book on Corrie ten Boom and told me there will always be good people in the world. You also told me never to apologize for standing up against hate and injustice. To Stella, I am so grateful for your advice, friendship, and kindness. To Deborah, Yvonne, and Ralph, I am grateful to all of you for being such good friends to me and always supporting my students, and to all of the other survivors and liberators I have had the honour to know, an eternal thanks to you.

To all of my students, past, present, and future: this book is for you. Thank you for being a part of my academic work. All of you inspired me to create this project, and I am eternally appreciative.

With thanks to Felicity Rivas, an Oakton student, who took courses with me and personally designed this amazing new cover. Thank you, City, for donating your artistry and talent for our new cover.

Finally, to my beautiful grandparents Marie and Francis. Thank you for always encouraging me to reach for the stars, the moon, and the sun. Hug Arabella for me.

**Acknowledgements**

There are more to thank with the third version of the OER, but the rest of the list remains the same.

Thank you to Oakton College for a second Teaching Learning Enhancement Project (TLEP) award that made a third revision to the book possible.

To the new student voices whose essays are found in the third edition; thank you for your scholarship and your generosity. I am continually so proud of all of you!

To my colleagues in the field, and to my former mentors and professors, thank you for contributing your work and expertise to this edition.

To my dear friends Wini and Robi Drell … a massive thank you for being there and for your generosity towards my students and me. Philip had a tremendous impact on students when he came to speak at Oakton, and I work to keep his legacy as a veteran and liberator alive in my US History and Holocaust (and other) classes, as we see from Ameen Khan's tribute and the other mentions of Philip throughout the book. I thank you both for allowing me to use his images in this text.

I recognize and appreciate my anonymous peer reviewers who looked over the essays and made suggestions for inclusion, omission, and correction. I am humbled by the generosity shown to me and to this project.

Thank you to the people who volunteered their time to review and make suggestions for edits. To the people who read excerpts, chapters, and even the entire book, I am grateful for your time.

I also thank Talia Langman at the ADL and Sherry Bard at Echoes & Reflections for their guidance and generosity in allowing me to reference resources.

My gratitude is deeply expressed to the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre for allowing quoted and other references to their work.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum was also crucial for my research, and I thank my friend Chelsea Halling-Nye for her contributions.

I acknowledge and deeply appreciate NARA, who make sources available for free use, such as the Eisenhower letter and the pink triangle badge found within this text.

A thank you to Kelley Szany, Vice President of Education and Exhibitions, Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, for allowing the reprinting of an important speech that she gave on an upstander that Adam Yunis had authored.

I thank Gregory Mullins, Ed.D., for his influence on the shaping of understanding pseudo-transformational leadership and the dangers of authority.

I must acknowledge the influence that historian Donald L. Niewyk has had on me as a scholar. From as an undergraduate, first reading his critical work *The Holocaust: Problems and Perspective of Interpretation*, to assigning it to my students, his writings have had a major influence on me. It is a dedication to him and his work that this book attempted to emulate. My twist on his approach was that I wanted to welcome my current and former students to contribute to this textbook as I argue that academia and publishing must be more inclusive, no matter what stage of the academic journey one is on.

I am so very honored of what my student contributors have accomplished. They took on the challenge of authoring a piece for

this OER and they all did such an amazing job with their respective works.

I thank all the guest contributors, from my former mentors and professors and others, friends new and old, colleagues, and experts to whom their donation of their critical scholarship, first-hand accounts, and other works greatly enhanced this unique book in a way that could not have been done otherwise. I am deeply appreciative of you all.

The opinions expressed by the guest contributors are entirely their own.

Should anything come to your attention that needs correction, please let me know. No matter how many times I read this book, there were changes, which again, is reflective of the organic beauty of an OER, which can be adjusted and adapted as needed. An editorial decision was made to remove the index and glossary from this edition. I invite feedback if the reader feels the index and glossary should be added back to the next edition. The book remains fully searchable and terms are generally explained in-text.

Again, I must acknowledge all of my students at Oakton College who have either taken my Holocaust class or taken another class with me, including American history, and the topic of totalitarian leaders, World Wars One and Two, Nazi Germany, the Holocaust, liberation survival, trauma, Genocide, Women's history, denial, distortion, war crimes, crimes against the peace, or crimes against humanity came up. Our class discussions inspired me to take this challenge on, and for that, I am grateful. This book is for all of you, past, present, and future students around the world.

## Table of Contents

**Foreword** 18

**Introduction** 22

**Unit One: Background** 31

Introduction to the Holocaust 56

**Unit Two: Antisemitism** 62

1. Introduction to the Subject of Antisemitism 62

2. Will Antisemitism Ever End? 69

**Unit Three: The Background and Stages of Genocide** 82

1. Genocide and Holocaust as an Outgrowth of the Political, Economic, Social, Ideological, and International Crises of the Twentieth Century 92

**Unit Four: Nazi Genocide** 96

1. Nazi Intent: The Holocaust 96

2. From Legal Exclusion to Systematic Genocide: Key Questions and Themes 106

3. How the Nuremberg Laws Led to the Holocaust 110

4. Nazi Genocide: Medical Experimentation 123

5. Echoes of El Paso: Racial Hygiene and the Early Roots of Dehumanization 162

7. The Roma 177

**Unit Five: Children and the Holocaust** 182

1. Children and the Holocaust: An Introduction 182

2. Holocaust Memory: The Kindertransport 185

3. On the Posthumous Life of Anne Frank 196
4. Black-American-German Children of Black-American GIs and German women 225
**Unit Six: Gender and the Holocaust** 238
1. The First Lady of the Reich: Magda Goebbels and Leadership in Nazi Germany 238
2. Construction of a Counter-World War II Memory 259
3. The Nazi Persecution of the LGBTQ Communities 275
4. William Arondeus and his legacy of courage 294
5. Irma Grese: "The Beautiful Beast" 302
6. Nazi Women 328
**Unit Seven: The Holocaust in the East** 343
1. The Memory of the Holocaust on the Nazi Occupied Territory of the Former Soviet Union 345
**Unit Eight: Holocaust, Architecture, Film, & Music** 368
1. Alexander Levy: Berlin, Tel Aviv, Auschwitz 368
2. Biographical Holocaust Films 383
3. I Never Saw Another Butterfly 404
4. Courage, Resilience, and Artistry in the Land of Death: The Women's Orchestra of Auschwitz Birkenau 406
**Unit Nine: Resistance and Upstanders** 418
1. Heroes of the Holocaust: Resistance and Upstanders 418
2. The Holocaust in North Africa and Arab and Muslim Upstanders 424
3. The Life of Janusz Korczak 438

4. Resistance: Warsaw Ghetto Uprising 457
5. The White Rose and Their American Connections 460
6. Josephine Baker 487
7. Virginia Hall: Spy and Resistor Extraordinaire 509
**Unit Ten: The Black Experience in Nazi Germany** 517
1. Black-Germans 522
2. Black-American GIs and the Nazis 527
**Unit Eleven: Liberation** 533
1. Philip Drell: A Remembrance 533
2. Philip Drell: The Liberator and Documentarian 542
3. Patton: Building of a Great Military Leader 547
**Unit Twelve: The Survivors** 573
1. Second Generation Survivor: Deborah Leonard 574
2. Survival Story of Ralph Rehbock 578
3. My Family and Kharkov 583
4. A Hidden Child's Story of Survival: Yvonne Aronson 586
5. The Testimony of Ruth Neumann Saffro 593
6. Caring for Holocaust Survivors as they Age 626
**Unit Thirteen: Holocaust Denial and Distortion** 638
1. What is Holocaust Denial? 638
2. Denial and Distortion 645
3. America and the Holocaust 649
4. Addendum 662
**Unit Fourteen: Holocaust Education and Memory** 667
1. Why Teach the Holocaust? 667

2. Bringing the Past to the Present 671

3. Women and the Holocaust: Podcast Transcript 676

**Unit Fifteen: The Holocaust, Literature, & Philosophy** 708

1. Delayed Voices, Recalibrated Agency: Gendered Agency in Testimonial Literature by Women Holocaust Survivors 709

2. Emmanuel Levinas 764

**Unit Sixteen: Conclusion and Reparations** 774

1. The Importance of Studying the Holocaust 774

2. History of Reparations Agreements and the Role of Social Services Agencies 780

**Special Assessments** 814

**Suggestions for Further Research** 816

**Postscript by Ellie Pearlman** 817

**About the Author and Editor** 820

**About the Contributors** 821

**How to Cite This Work** pages 8 and 834

***Warning***: I must caution the reader that many of the chapters below contain potentially very triggering and graphic details of assault, mass murder, racism, abuse, child abuse, mass atrocities, experiments on humans, gassings and shootings, denial, distortion, torture, rape, murder, war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, and gendercide.

> Dachau has been my own lifelong point of no return. Between the moment when I walked through the gate of that prison, with its infamous motto, 'Arbeit Macht Frei,' and when I walked out at the end of a day that had no ordinary scale of hours, I was changed, and how I looked at the human condition, the world we live in, changed ... Years of war had taught me a great deal, but war was nothing like Dachau. Compared to Dachau, war was clean.

Quote attributed to Martha Gellhorn, author, novelist, and one of the greatest war correspondents in history (1908–1998)

**Foreword**

## In Shadows of Shadows

*Danny M. Cohen*

I am 17. I stand at the entrance of the archives at Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust memorial and museum in Jerusalem. From her desk, an archivist looks up at me. "I'm looking for my family," I say. My heart is racing. The archivist lets out a cynical laugh. "You'll never find them."

I never met my Grandpa Maurice. A Jewish survivor of Nazi-occupied Holland, he died when my mother was a young girl. And yet he is always with me; my middle name is Maurice. I am 9. I ask my mother to tell me the names of her great-grandparents. She doesn't know. The gaps in my family's history create a mirrored silence inside of me. This is an inherited obstruction, as if certain questions must be swallowed rather than spoken.

"Auschwitz is a must-see," my friend says, after a trip to Poland, as if having experienced some kind of Holocaust epiphany. I am 20 and I have no interest in visiting Auschwitz, or any site of Nazi atrocity. The idea terrifies me. I imagine myself inside deteriorating gas chambers. I don't want to be suffocated by the sight of disintegrating piles of human hair. I don't want that feeling of profound horror or numbing defeat. I don't want to stand where my people-or any people-or my family-choked to death. I don't want to be seen trying to make sense of what can never be understood, or to feel obliged to pray or to sing or to be judged if I can't burst into tears along with everyone else. I've become frightened of the ghosts of my grandfather's family. Surely, they'll only recognize me as a disrespectful tourist, queuing for that critically acclaimed attraction, that thrill-ride at Birkenau.

I knew my grandfather through a handful of photographs. The hand-me-down memories I have of him include a list of unrelated facts and anecdotes. I am 11. I stare at photographs of

Grandpa on his wedding day. I know he went bald. I learn how to pronounce his unusual Dutch surname, *Ziekenoppasser*. I overhear pieces of his story, whispered at family events, when the adults think I'm not listening. My grandfather had escaped Nazi-Europe before the rest of his family-all Jewish-had been sent away. "He lost everyone," my uncle says. He says "lost," as if my grandfather had misplaced his keys, or as if they had all wandered off in the wrong direction. But I know that "lost" means they had been murdered.

I am 17. At Yad Vashem, the archivist behind the desk laughs at me. Finding information about my murdered family will be unlikely, she warns. I suppose she's trying to prepare me for disappointment. But then she adds, "Unless they were Dutch." My neck feels hot. "Yes, they were from The Netherlands," Again, the archivist laughs. "Still, you'll never find them. Unless they had an unusual name." I nod my head. "*Ziekenoppasser*." The archivist, no longer laughing, stands and lead me to the books of the dead.

I am 42. I am a parent now. And I teach about hidden Holocaust histories. I write and teach about the Nazis' forced sterilizations of people of African, Roma, and Jewish descent and people with disabilities, which ran in parallel to the U.S. governments' forced sterilizations of people with disabilities and Black, Latina, and Native American women throughout the twentieth century; the Holocaust was an extreme case of White Supremacy. When I teach about the Nazis' use of gas chambers to murder entire Jewish families and Jewish communities, I support my students to explore why Holocaust education and commemoration rarely include stories of the Nazis' Roma and disabled victims who were also murdered in the Nazi gas chambers. I teach about the Nazis' persecution of homosexuals and about sexual violence in the Nazi camps, and I help my students to identify connections between Nazi ideology and contemporary homophobia, transphobia, and misogyny.

I am 35. My suitcase is packed for my first visit to the site of Auschwitz. In general terms, I know what to expect. I've studied

the photographs of the camp and read the books and taken the online virtual tour. I have a good idea of what I'll see. But I don't know how I'll respond in the moment or how I might be changed by this journey. Part of me fears being entirely overwhelmed. Part of me fears feeling nothing. Part of me expects, at nighttime, to slip back into the surreal Holocaust nightmares of my childhood.

We walk in shadows of shadows. We grow up surrounded by silence. Perpetrators of violence hide and deny their crimes, and bystanders in positions of power pretend that they couldn't have taken a stand against them. Only certain narratives make it into our collective memories and, even then, they are too often oversimplified into tales of good versus evil, heroes versus monsters. But the truth is dark. Someone's father drives the train to the Nazi camp. Someone's sister whips the prisoners. Someone's mother injects lethal chemicals into the veins of her patients. Someone's son pours the pellets of Zyklon B into the gas chambers filled with other people's children. Too often we forget that the Holocaust was perpetrated by humans against other humans.

I stand at the ruins of Gas Chamber III at Birkenau and I recite to my group the little I know of my family's story. I am 35. As I speak, I wonder if this was exactly where my cousins were murdered. Suddenly, unexpectedly, I'm struck with the realization that I will likely return to Auschwitz a number of times in my life. I am no longer scared. This is my family's history. This is my history. This is my daughter's history.

I am 17. I stand in the archives at Yad Vashem. The archivist takes me to the books of the dead. In the final book, on the final pages, we find *Ziekenoppasser-Ziekenoppasser-Ziekenoppasser*-a list of men and women, all with the last name *Ziekenoppasser*, dates of birth-*Ziekenoppasser*-places of birth-*Ziekenoppasser-Ziekenoppasser-Ziekenoppasser*-deported from Amsterdam and other Dutch cities and towns-*Ziekenoppasser-Ziekenoppasser*-murdered at Sobibor-*Ziekenoppasser*-murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Sobibor. Sobibor. *Ziekenoppasser*. Auschwitz. *Ziekenoppasser*. Auschwitz. Auschwitz. Auschwitz.

*Ziekenoppasser*. I reach to pick up the book, but the archivist stops me. She carries the book, cradles it like a newborn baby, to the photocopier. I fax the pages to my mother and my uncles in London. But they don't know these names. My grandfather hadn't told them enough. Either these men and women are strangers-someone else's family-or they belong to my family's lost memories.

# Introduction

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

This textbook, an Open Educational Resource (OER), is dedicated to the community college student and to the community we serve. The first edition of this book was developed during a global pandemic, which has lent pathos to this project. So many of us have lost loved ones and were, and have been away from normalcy. Reflecting on that, I think about my beloved friend, everyone's grandma, and Holocaust survivor Magda Brown. As Magda said to my students in late March 2020, right after the pandemic began, that you have to have, and these are her exact words as she typed them in response to a question my student asked: "Thank you for paying close attention to my testimony and remembering many details. I want to share with you the words I live by. YOU HAVE TO HAVE FAITH, FANTASY, DRIVE, DETERMINATION, AND BELIEF THAT TOMORROW WILL BE BETTER." Magda's words serve us all well. Sadly, we lost Magda in July 2020. She was a much-loved member of my family,

our community, and her drive for Holocaust education was truly a global inspiration to everyone.

Following Magda's example, I note that since I have been teaching the Holocaust and Genocide, what I have learned since, and regret much, is that the cost of textbooks is a systemic barrier to higher education. Thus, a primary goal with creating this OER was to develop an affordable, applicable, adaptable, creative, and helpful resource. The OER is meant to introduce the subject and a primer to topics not often discussed and include many contributions from my former students, new researchers, my colleagues, and noted scholars in the field. The subject matter included in this book is rich in topics and varied in scope.

For the students having a free sourcebook that can serve as a research guide will benefit them. Also, it can serve as a reminder of the critical objectives taught in a Holocaust class, supporting the development of student's critical thinking and emotional literacy by providing a framework by which they can challenge misconceptions. The guide is by no means perfect. There are more subject to be added, and corrections to be made. That is the beauty

of an open-educational resource. The author can adjust, make additions, and complete deletions. New information comes out and from the rarest of places.

As an example, Wendy Lower's book, *The Ravine: a Family, a Photograph, a Holocaust Massacre Revealed* was published. It took ten years, but Lower, 80 years after the murder of a mother and a child at the hands of Nazi collaborators, saw that the woman and her child's identity emerged. Through her observation and action research engagement, Lower discovered a previously unknown third victim, a tiny baby whose hand is barely visible in the photograph, as the baby was hidden in the mother's lower body. Last, Lower tracked down who took the image. The photographer was a member of the Slovakian resistance. The perpetrators' identities were also exposed. Through rich observation and action research, Lower created a thematic framework that resulted in a groundbreaking qualitative study.

Holocaust education is not finite. There are more topics to be covered, and uncovered; thus, I will add more chapters so the reader can expect more additions. Note that citations may also be

added, updated, or deleted. I welcome suggestions for future content. If you are interested in contributing an entry, feel free to reach out to me. This OER was truly a community effort, and I am grateful to everyone who was a part of this servant leadership project to make a difference and provide a free educational resource. The mission and vision of this OER emerged based on my work within the Jewish Studies concentration that I founded in 2012 at Oakton College.

The mission of this text is to uphold a strategic obligation to teach Holocaust studies to future generations within a fair, tolerant, and academic environment founded on the principles of patience, justice, accountability, empathy, and honesty.

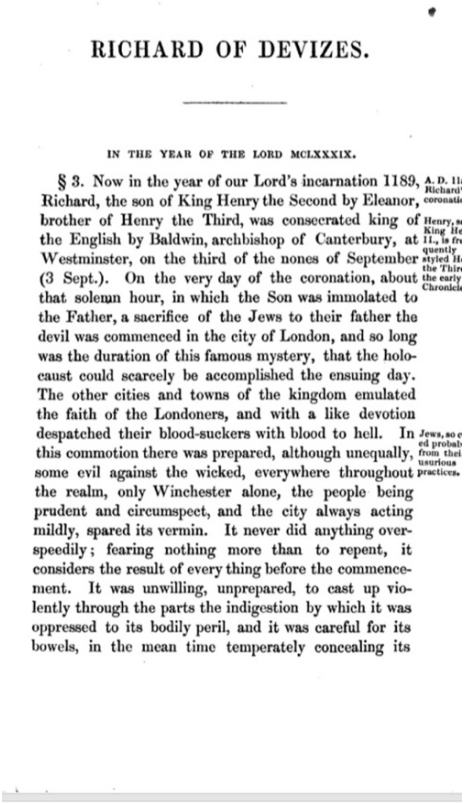
The vision is clear, as the book demonstrates its determination to offer a guide to promote critical thinking about the Holocaust. To achieve the mission and vision of the text, the specific goals are as follows. The first goal affirms a commitment to Holocaust education. The second goal promotes the study of the subject and provides a free, approachable text for students to learn from to work towards preventing ignorance, stop hate, racism,

antisemitism, and anti-immigrant prejudices. The third goal encourages inclusive discourse encouraged for its student population via academic research, live seminars, and guided learning communities.

Research supports this need for an approachable text that not only teaches students about the dangers of hate but critically, they must be instructed in what motivated the perpetrators. Learning about motivation is an essential element to help students understand motivations and state-sponsored rewards for perpetrators and their relationship to the victimization of those designated as undesirables. We will see how genocidal precursors influenced Nazi racialist and gender ideologies and practices and how the Holocaust threatened the collapse of humanistic values.

Here is what is believed by some scholars to be one of the earliest known uses of the word *holocaust* to describe the destruction of Jews. Please review only the first page, where the word *holocaust* is used to describe the murder of the Jews of London. The lowercase *h* is intentional; the uppercase *H* in *Holocaust* is generally reserved for the genocide perpetrated by

Nazi Germany, whereas the term *holocaust* (lowercase) has historically been used in a broader sense to describe mass destruction or genocide in other contexts. There are also two different file formats available below in case Google Books does not work for you: http://tiny.cc/u3f4101



RICHARD OF DEVIZES.

IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD MCLXXXIX.

§ 3. Now in the year of our Lord's incarnation 1189, Richard, the son of King Henry the Second by Eleanor, brother of Henry the Third, was consecrated king of the English by Baldwin, archbishop of Canterbury, at Westminster, on the third of the nones of September (3 Sept.). On the very day of the coronation, about that solemn hour, in which the Son was immolated to the Father, a sacrifice of the Jews to their father the devil was commenced in the city of London, and so long was the duration of this famous mystery, that the holocaust could scarcely be accomplished the ensuing day. The other cities and towns of the kingdom emulated the faith of the Londoners, and with a like devotion despatched their blood-suckers with blood to hell. In this commotion there was prepared, although unequally, some evil against the wicked, everywhere throughout the realm, only Winchester alone, the people being prudent and circumspect, and the city always acting mildly, spared its vermin. It never did anything overspeedily; fearing nothing more than to repent, it considers the result of every thing before the commencement. It was unwilling, unprepared, to cast up violently through the parts the indigestion by which it was oppressed to its bodily peril, and it was careful for its bowels, in the mean time temperately concealing its

A. D. 11 Richard' coronati

Henry, s King He 11., is fr quently styled H the Thir the early Chronicl

Jews, so c ed probab from thei usurious practices.

For students, learning about the Holocaust can broaden historical and ethical horizons through a wide variety of sources, including historical documentation and testimony. My hope and goal are to engage the reader and challenge them to continue studying the subject. As ongoing pedagogical research shows, again, we must lead students towards the intellectual skills needed to understand how the Nazis came to power, how the Holocaust evolved and how ordinary people can make a difference. To begin this exploration, it is essential to first recognize the vibrant and diverse nature of Jewish life in Europe prior to the Nazi regime.

Prior to the Nazi regime (1933-1945), Jewish existence in Europe was characterized by considerable diversity. Jewish communities were dispersed across both urban and rural areas, engaging in a variety of languages, religious practices, and societal roles. Some families adhered closely to religious traditions, whereas others pursued secular education, politics, literature, science, and the arts.

Throughout Europe, Jews significantly contributed to the cultural, economic, and intellectual fabric of their nations while maintaining distinct communal institutions, customs, and identities. Recognizing this diversity is crucial, as it underscores that the Holocaust obliterated not a generic population, but rather vibrant communities composed of individuals with unique histories, aspirations, and lifestyles.

The examination of Jewish life before the war also dispels the prevalent misconception that Jewish history in Europe is solely a narrative of persecution. Although antisemitism was undeniably present, Jewish communities experienced eras of creativity, accomplishment, and social integration. Jewish writers, educators, business owners, artists, laborers, and professionals played pivotal roles in shaping the societies in which they resided. By examining the everyday experiences of Jews prior to the Holocaust, students develop a fuller historical perspective and can better appreciate the profound loss inflicted by Nazi policies, which sought to destroy not only individual lives but also centuries of cultural, religious, and communal development.

**Bibliographic sources and recommendations for additional reading**

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Dwork, Deborah, and Robert Jan van Pelt. *Holocaust: A History*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2002.

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## Unit One: Background

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

In the years immediately following the First World War, Germany experienced widespread political instability, economic hardship, and social unrest, creating conditions that allowed extremist ideas to gain support. The rise of Nazism was rooted in a long history of European and German antisemitism, which Adolf Hitler exploited through persuasive speeches that falsely portrayed Jewish people as dangerous enemies of the German nation. After the Reichstag (German Parliament) was burned in 1933, Hitler used the crisis to restrict civil liberties and eliminate political opposition, paving the way for Nazi beliefs to become official government policy. Central to Nazi ideology was the goal of acquiring *Lebensraum* ("living space") through territorial expansion. As the regime consolidated power, discrimination against Jewish people became increasingly systematic and legalized through measures such as the Nuremberg Laws, laying the foundation for the persecution and genocide that would follow.

Warning: I must caution the reader that the information below may contain potentially very triggering and graphic details of abuse, child abuse, sexual violence, trauma, mass atrocities, experiments on humans, gassings and shootings, torture, rape, murder, war crimes, crimes against humanity, crimes against the peace, genocide, gendercide, racism, denial, discrimination, dehumanization, offensive images, offensive language and depictions, offensive words, and other violence.

We can situate the start of the Holocaust to 30 January 1933, when Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany (for reference, Nazi Germany was defeated and surrendered to the Allied powers on 8 May 1945). To enforce Nazi rule and carry out

the Holocaust, the Nazi Party relied on three major paramilitary and police organizations: the SA (*Sturmabteilung*), the SS (*Schutzstaffel*), and the Gestapo (*Geheime Staatspolizei*). Together, these organizations spread terror throughout Germany, Europe, and North Africa.

The SA (1921), or *Sturmabteilung* (Stormtroopers), commonly known as the Brownshirts, was the first major Nazi paramilitary organization. It was later joined by the SS (1925), or *Schutzstaffel* ("Protection Squadron"). Established in 1925, the SS remained a division of the Nazi Party until 1933, when it became an important part of the bureaucracy of the Third Reich. Under the leadership of Heinrich Himmler, the Reichsführer-SS, the organization developed into a vast and complex hierarchy that played a central role in implementing Nazi racial policies and the Holocaust.

The Gestapo (*Geheime Staatspolizei*), or Secret State Police, was founded in April 1933 by Hermann Göring. The Gestapo was responsible for identifying, investigating, and suppressing individuals and groups considered enemies of the Nazi

regime. Later absorbed into Himmler's SS structure, it became a key instrument of state repression and political terror.

Himmler also served as *Chef der Deutschen Polizei* (Chief of the German Police). Under his direction, the SS expanded into numerous police and security branches, including the *SS-Totenkopfverbände* (SS Death's Head Units), which administered and guarded the concentration camps and later played a major role in the operation of the ghettos, concentration camps, and killing centers.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum notes that approximately 2.7 million Jews were murdered in the Nazi killing centers, while an additional 3.3 million were killed in camps, ghettos, mass shootings, and elsewhere. Of the six million Jews that were killed, 1.5 million were children under the age of 16. Five million other non-Jews were also murdered by the Nazis. Once Hitler came to power on 30 January 1933, the legal and administrative foundations for the Holocaust were rapidly established. These policies enabled the progressive exclusion,

segregation, and dehumanization of Jewish populations, which later escalated into mass deportation and murder.

During the first six years of Hitler's dictatorship, more than 400 decrees and regulations were enacted that restricted nearly every aspect of the public and private lives of German citizens. Review this brief passage, which is excerpted from my next book, and is copyrighted to me. It may provide context for you as you approach this textbook, especially considering "no Hitler, no Holocaust" and the rise of Nazism. Consider: why did the Nazis seek "legitimacy" and why did they do everything in stages, while also using laws to start their genocidal plans?

Demonstrating how the "perception of legitimacy in the mind of the target of power is critical" in understanding the Nazis and why millions of people (not just in Germany) followed and supported them. From Adelé-Marie, Wendy. *Title and publisher of book forthcoming*, 2027; additionally, Adelé-Marie explains that

> G.W. Fairholm notes that the "perception of legitimacy in the mind of the target of power is critical. Unless the target sees leaders as having a legitimate right to command, they lose a valuable basis for using power. Furthermore, legitimacy unaccepted is not legitimate at all, regardless of the official nature of the delegation of right"

(Fairholm, 2009). This author then understands that leadership must be accepted. If leadership is rejected, it is not legitimate. Followers must acknowledge legitimacy in their leaders; otherwise, leadership holds no value and then is illegitimate. The basic idea centers on the fact that if a leader is perceived as legitimate in the mind of the followers, then the power of that leader is valid. If people think about and reflect on whether their leader acts in their best interest, all it takes is a simple seed of doubt to germinate. If the doubt is erased due to the general overall perception of the leader as someone who has the organization's best interests, where the workers are generally happy with their condition, the doubt may be erased.

However, the moment that something goes wrong, then the doubt about the power of the leader creeps back into some people's minds. One last comment: followers may perceive power as legitimate if there is a threat, whether real or implied. Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl explored this theory, as have many other psychologists and historians (Stirling).

Known as the psychology of coercion, Frankl explained why the Nazis were viewed as legitimate in people's minds. Frankl said that the Nazis used historical antisemitism, amplified fear, and encouraged projected hysteria; therefore, the Nazis used, in part, psychological coercion to "justify" actions against the Jews and others (Stirling). The Nazis used threats, real and implied, this a perceived lack of compliance was embedded in people's minds, which helps explain why so many resonated with the murderous Nazis and viewed their power and applications of the same as legitimate (Stirling).

Legitimacy may signify safety for some. During the first five years following the First World War (1918–1923), German society descended into internal disorder and mutual recrimination. The origins of Nazi genocide lay in the long history of European and German anti-Semitism. Consider Hitler's intent as expressed in the following two excerpts from *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), published on 18 July 1925:

> "If at the outbreak and during the war, twelve or fifteen thousand of these Hebrew nation-corruptors had been held under poison gas once, as hundreds of thousands of our best German workers from all classes and callings had to endure on the battlefield, then the sacrifice of millions on the front would not have been in vain." And

> "On the contrary: twelve thousand scoundrels eliminated at the right time would perhaps have saved the lives of a million Germans who are more orderly and more valuable for the future."

Were there precursors? Yes. During the First World War, German occupation authorities in Belgium and northern France established forced labor camps and detention facilities for civilian populations. Thousands of Belgians and French civilians endured deportation, coercive labor, and deadly conditions. These measures were not a direct blueprint for the Holocaust, but they revealed how

bureaucratic systems, military authority, and modern state power could be mobilized against civilian populations on a massive scale.

Additionally, for those seeking to understand the origins of Nazi policy, it is important to examine the many precursors that existed long before 1933. Among one of the most significant was the Twenty-Five-Point Programme, adopted by the NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers' Party) on 24 February 1920. Although not every point was later implemented as written, the document clearly expressed key elements of Nazi ideology and foreshadowed many of the exclusionary and discriminatory policies that would follow.

I insert the Programme here from IPaul Halsall Aug 1997. Modified 2003, who made this available "This text is part of the Internet Modern History Sourcebook and permission is granted for electronic copying, distribution in print form for educational purposes." Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression Volume IV, Office of the United States Chief Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality, Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1946 USMARC Cataloging Record

TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENT 1708-PS

Edited by: Dr. Robert Ley
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Franz Eher, successor Munich

The program of the NSDAP

The program is the political foundation of the NSDAP and accordingly the primary political law of the State. It has been made brief and clear intentionally.

All legal precepts must be applied in the spirit of the party program.

Since the taking over of control, the Fuehrer has succeeded in the realization of essential portions of the Party program from the fundamentals to the detail.

The Party Program of the NSDAP was proclaimed on the 24 February 1920 by Adolf Hitler at the first large Party gathering in Munich and since that day has remained unaltered. Within the national socialist philosophy is summarized in 25 points:

1. We demand the unification of all Germans in the Greater Germany on the basis of the right of self-determination of peoples.

2. We demand equality of rights for the German people in respect to the other nations; abrogation of the peace treaties of Versailles and St. Germain.

3. We demand land and territory (colonies) for the sustenance of our people, and colonization for our surplus population.

4. Only a member of the race can be a citizen. A member of the race can only be one who is of German blood, without

consideration of creed. Consequently, no Jew can be a member of the race.

5. Whoever has no citizenship is to be able to live in Germany only as a guest, and must be under the authority of legislation for foreigners.

6. The right to determine matters concerning administration and law belongs only to the citizen. Therefore we demand that every public office, of any sort whatsoever, whether in the Reich, the county or municipality, be filled only by citizens. We combat the corrupting parliamentary economy, office-holding only according to party inclinations without consideration of character or abilities.

7. We demand that the state be charged first with providing the opportunity for a livelihood and way of life for the citizens. If it is impossible to sustain the total population of the State, then the members of foreign nations (non-citizens) are to be expelled from the Reich.

8. Any further immigration of non-citizens is to be prevented. We demand that all non-Germans, who have immigrated to Germany since the 2 August 1914, be forced immediately to leave the Reich.

9. All citizens must have equal rights and obligations.

10. The first obligation of every citizen must be to work both spiritually and physically. The activity of individuals is not to counteract the interests of the universality, but must have its result within the framework of the whole for the benefit of all Consequently we demand:

11. Abolition of unearned (work and labour) incomes. Breaking of rent-slavery.

12. In consideration of the monstrous sacrifice in property and blood that each war demands of the people personal enrichment

through a war must be designated as a crime against the people. Therefore we demand the total confiscation of all war profits.

13. We demand the nationalization of all (previous) associated industries (trusts).

14. We demand a division of profits of all heavy industries.

15. We demand an expansion on a large scale of old age welfare.

16. We demand the creation of a healthy middle class and its conservation, immediate communalization of the great warehouses and their being leased at low cost to small firms, the utmost consideration of all small firms in contracts with the State, county or municipality.

17. We demand a land reform suitable to our needs, provision of a law for the free expropriation of land for the purposes of public utility, abolition of taxes on land and prevention of all speculation in land.

18. We demand struggle without consideration against those whose activity is injurious to the general interest. Common national criminals, usurers, Schieber and so forth are to be punished with death, without consideration of confession or race.

19. We demand substitution of a German common law in place of the Roman Law serving a materialistic world-order.

20. The state is to be responsible for a fundamental reconstruction of our whole national education program, to enable every capable and industrious German to obtain higher education and subsequently introduction into leading positions. The plans of instruction of all educational institutions are to conform with the experiences of practical life. The comprehension of the concept of the State must be striven for by the school [*Staatsbuergerkund*e] as early as the beginning of understanding. We demand the education at the expense of the State of outstanding intellectually gifted

children of poor parents without consideration of position or profession.

21. The State is to care for the elevating national health by protecting the mother and child, by outlawing child-labor, by the encouragement of physical fitness, by means of the legal establishment of a gymnastic and sport obligation, by the utmost support of all organizations concerned with the physical instruction of the young.

22. We demand abolition of the mercenary troops and formation of a national army.

23. We demand legal opposition to known lies and their promulgation through the press. In order to enable the provision of a German press, we demand, that: a. All writers and employees of the newspapers appearing in the German language be members of the race: b. Non-German newspapers be required to have the express permission of the State to be published. They may not be printed in the German language: c. Non-Germans are forbidden by law any financial interest in German publications, or any influence on them, and as punishment for violations the closing of such a publication as well as the immediate expulsion from the Reich of the non-German concerned. Publications which are counter to the general good are to be forbidden. We demand legal prosecution of artistic and literary forms which exert a destructive influence on our national life, and the closure of organizations opposing the above made demands.

24. We demand freedom of religion for all religious denominations within the state so long as they do not endanger its existence or oppose the moral senses of the Germanic race. The Party as such advocates the standpoint of a positive Christianity without binding itself confessionally to any one denomination. It combats the Jewish-materialistic spirit within and around us, and is convinced that a lasting recovery of our nation can only succeed from within on the framework: common utility precedes individual utility.

25. For the execution of all of this we demand the formation of a strong central power in the Reich. Unlimited authority of the central parliament over the whole Reich and its organizations in general. The forming of state and profession chambers for the execution of the laws made by the Reich within the various states of the confederation. The leaders of the Party promise, if necessary by sacrificing their own lives, to support by the execution of the points set forth above without consideration.

Adolf Hitler proclaimed the following explanation for this program on the 13th of April 1928:

Explanation

Regarding the false interpretations of Point 17 of the program of the NSDAP on the part of our opponents, the following definition is necessary:

"Since the NSDAP stands on the platform of private ownership it happens that the passage" gratuitous expropriation concerns only the creation of legal opportunities to expropriate if necessary, land which has been illegally acquired or is not administered from the view-point of the national welfare. This is directed primarily against the Jewish land-speculation companies.

Now that you have read this 1920 document, what are your thoughts about the intent of the Nazis? So, then, when did the Holocaust begin?

To reinforce, note that the Holocaust began on 30 January 1933; this was the day Adolf Hitler took office as Chancellor. At the start of Hitler's reign (in 1933 alone), the Third Reich established about 110 camps specifically designed to imprison

some 10,000 political opponents and others. Dachau, built in March 1933, was the prototype of what was to come. The Reichstag was burnt to the ground on 27 February 1933, and the Enabling Act was passed on 24 March 1933; during the first six years of Hitler's dictatorship, more than 400 decrees and laws were passed, separate from the Nuremberg Laws, that restricted all aspects of German public and private lives.

Hitler did not become *Führer* until 2 August 1934, when President von Hindenburg passed away. Within hours, the Nazi Reichstag announced the following law, falsely back-dated 24 hours, implying the president's consent:

> The Reich Government has enacted the following law which is hereby promulgated.
>
> Section 1. The office of Reich President will be combined with that of Reich Chancellor. The existing authority of the Reich President will consequently be transferred to the Führer and Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler. He will select his deputy.
>
> Section 2. This law is effective as of the time of the death of Reich President von Hindenburg.

These two codicils were illegal and violated the German Constitution. Nevertheless, they consolidated Hitler's authority by

effectively transforming his leadership into law. Members of the German Officer Corps and others were then required to swear a personal oath of loyalty to Hitler:

> I swear by God this sacred oath: I will render unconditional obedience to Adolf Hitler, the Führer of the German Reich and people, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and will be ready as a brave soldier to risk my life at any time for this oath.

This concentration of authority around a single leader helped create the conditions in which dissent could be suppressed and entire groups could be systematically excluded from German society. Additional insight into this process can be found in the article “Us vs. Them: The Process of Othering” and provides further context to understanding Nazi intent.

Under the Nazi regime, numerous groups were targeted, including gay men, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Catholics, adherents of other religious minorities, Roma and Sinti (historically referred to by the pejorative term “Gypsy”; antiziganism describes past and present discrimination and violence directed against these communities), people with disabilities, Black Germans, and many others.

For example, on 14 July 1933, the Nazi government enacted the Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases, which authorized the forced sterilization of individuals deemed to possess hereditary conditions and was also used against Black Germans. During the Nazi period (1933–1945), Black Germans experienced discrimination, persecution, forced sterilization, imprisonment, and, in some cases, murder. Children of mixed African-German ancestry were likewise subjected to increasing racial discrimination and exclusion following the enactment of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935, including restrictions on education and social participation. The sterilization law predated the Nuremberg Laws by more than two years and is often regarded by historians as an important early step in the development of Nazi racial policy.

The T4 Programme later followed, as noted by Ellie Pearlman in her contribution to this textbook. Through hundreds of laws, decrees, and administrative measures, the Nazi regime created a legal and bureaucratic framework that identified, isolated, and persecuted those it defined as undesirable. Himmler,

*Reichsführer-SS* and one of the principal architects of the Holocaust, oversaw the expansion of the SS and the implementation of racial policies across Germany and occupied Europe. His vision of a racially engineered and "Aryan" future helped drive the persecution and murder of millions of people during the Nazi era.

These developments raise an important question: were there warning signs of Nazi intent? The evidence suggests that there were. Readers may recall the 1920 25-Point Programme, which outlined many of the movement's ideological goals long before the Nazis came to power. After Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor in January 1933, these intentions increasingly took concrete form. One early example was the establishment of Dachau in March 1933, the first Nazi concentration camp and the prototype for the camp system that followed.

There were also early warning signs in over 400 laws that were passed in 1933 alone, including, as just two examples, the USHMM notes:

April 25, 1933

The German government issues the Law against Overcrowding in Schools and Universities, which dramatically limits the number of Jewish students attending public schools.

July 14, 1933
The German government passes the "Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases" (*Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses*), mandating the forced sterilization of certain individuals with physical and mental disabilities. This new law provides a basis for the involuntary sterilization of people with physical and mental disabilities or mental illness, Roma (Gypsies), "asocial elements," and Afro-Germans.

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "Warning Signs: 1938." *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*. 2014. http://www.ushmm.org

Consider:

•During the first five years immediately following the First World War, German society fell into a state of internal disorder and accusation.

•The origins of Nazi genocide were found in the long history of European and German anti-Semitism

•In 1933, the Reichstag (German Parliament) was burned, allowing Hitler to restrict civil liberties of German opponents.

•As a result of Hitler's rise to power, Nazi beliefs became state policy and law.

•An important goal of Nazism was living space (lebensraum)

•Many Germans accepted Hitler's hatred of the Jews because he was a powerful and convincing speaker. He expressed that Jews were violent and dangerous.

• The systematizing and regulating of discrimination of Jews in early Nazi Germany was made possible through the Nuremberg Laws and other laws that predated and followed the Nuremberg Laws.

So, when did the Final Solution begin? Christopher Browning, author of *Ordinary Men*, writes, "Most historians agree there is no 'big bang' theory for the origins of the Final Solution, predicated on a single decision made at a single moment in time" and that the "decision-making process was prolonged and incremental."

Additionally, in 2019, as first explained to me by historian Elisabeth Baer at the ACLA conference, and later reflected in broader scholarly and institutional usage, the terminology used to describe Nazi camp systems has continued to evolve. The terms death camps and extermination camps have increasingly been

replaced in academic and museum contexts with the term killing centres.

Formerly, six sites were commonly identified in this category: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Bełżec, Chełmno, Sobibór, Treblinka, and Majdanek (Lublin). However, Majdanek is now frequently reassessed by historians and institutions, including the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, as primarily a concentration camp rather than a killing centre. This shift in classification reduces the number of designated killing centres to five: Auschwitz-Birkenau, Bełżec, Chełmno, Sobibór, and Treblinka. Some concentration camps, including Mauthausen and Ravensbrück, contained gas chambers, but they are not classified within this specific category. Camps are also categorized as transit, labour, and POW centres.

This ongoing reassessment also affects broader systems of categorization. Scholars continue to document approximately 42,500 Nazi ghettos and camps across German-occupied Europe. This figure includes the full camp and ghetto system as currently understood, though it remains open to revision as new archival

material is uncovered and historical classifications are refined.

The etymology and usage of the term Holocaust, with a capital "H," refers to the systematic, bureaucratic, and ideologically driven attempt by Nazi Germany to annihilate the Jews of Europe. The Holocaust remains one of the most extensively documented acts of state-sponsored mass murder in modern history. Six million Jews were systematically murdered by the Nazi regime and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945, including approximately 1.5 million children under the age of sixteen. In addition, the Nazis murdered approximately five million other victims, including Roma, Jehovah's Witnesses, prisoners of war, gay men, disabled individuals, and others targeted by the regime, a figure that continues to be refined as research develops.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and other institutions emphasize that while other genocides have occurred, the systematic nature and scale of the Holocaust remain historically distinctive in both documentation and intent. Current scholarship and museum-based research also emphasize that there is no single comprehensive Nazi document that records every

death. Instead, the historical record is reconstructed from hundreds of thousands of German documents, including transport lists and records of killing operations at major sites. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “How Many People Did the Nazis Murder,” Holocaust Encyclopedia, accessed 11 September 2024)

Within this evolving framework of documentation and classification, even site designations remain subject to scholarly reassessment. For example, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has noted that Majdanek may be more accurately understood as a concentration camp rather than a killing centre. If this reassessment is fully adopted across the field, it would formally revise the total number of killing centres and further adjust the classification of Nazi camps and ghettos across occupied Europe.

These revisions do not weaken historical understanding. Rather, they demonstrate how Holocaust historiography continues to develop as new evidence, methodological approaches, and archival interpretations emerge. Finally, the Holocaust must also be understood within a broader ideological and historical context.

The *Deutschvölkischer Schutz- und Trutzbund*, the largest antisemitic federation in post–First World War Germany, formed a significant part of the *völkisch* movement that rejected the democratic order of the Weimar Republic. Its publications and networks influenced early Nazi ideology and helped normalize antisemitic discourse that later appeared in propaganda films, including *Der Ewige Jude* (1940), and in broader state messaging across print, radio, education, and youth organizations. These systems of propaganda contributed to the normalization of exclusion, persecution, and ultimately mass murder.

Nazi propaganda operated across a wide range of media, including film. As David Welch (1983) observed, antisemitic messaging embedded in film played a significant role in shaping public support for Nazi policies against the Jews. One of the most prominent examples was *Der Ewige Jude* (The Eternal Jew), a pseudo-documentary released in 1940 under the supervision of Joseph Goebbels, which portrayed Jews as a biological threat to be eliminated in order to ensure the survival of the so-called Aryan population. This messaging was reinforced through books, radio

broadcasts, and institutionalized education across the school system. Children were taught to distinguish between "Aryans" and Jews as part of compulsory ideological instruction, while membership in Nazi youth organizations further normalized racial doctrine. Over time, the cumulative effect of these propaganda systems contributed to the normalization of exclusion, dehumanization, and ultimately mass murder across Nazi-occupied Europe.

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## Introduction to the Holocaust

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

From 1933 to 1945, Nazi Germany and its collaborators perpetrated the Holocaust and genocide against millions of people. Holocaust educator and scholar Dr. Leon Stein defined the Holocaust as an intentional, systematic, bureaucratic, and nearly successful ideological attempt to murder the Jews totally and cosmically because they existed. The word *cosmically* reflects the Nazi belief that Jews constituted a universal enemy whose complete eradication was necessary for the creation of the racial state envisioned by Nazi ideology.

A central act of state undertaken by the Nazis and their collaborators, the Holocaust resulted in the systematic murder of six million Jews. The Nazi regime and its collaborators also persecuted and murdered millions of other victims, including Roma and Sinti, people with disabilities, Soviet prisoners of war, Jehovah's Witnesses, gay men (under Paragraph 175; see the essay "The Nazi Persecution of the LGBTQ communities" and others that follow), political opponents, and others. Historically, scholars

and institutions have differed in how they define the relationship between the Holocaust and these broader genocidal policies.

For example, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum currently defines the Holocaust as "the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jews by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945" (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum 2023). This textbook recognizes the centrality of the destruction of European Jewry while also acknowledging the millions of other victims persecuted and murdered by the Nazi regime and its collaborators.

Xenophobic agrarian-oriented ideology dictated this need to cleanse the German race by the complete annihilation of all Jews and the cosmic destruction of Judaism. The Nazis also murdered five million non-Jews; in 2023 the USHMM stated that "Roma, people with disabilities, and Poles were targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including gay men, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissident also suffered severe

oppression and death under Nazi tyranny" (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2023).

The word "Holocaust" was derived from the Latin *holocaustum*, and the Greek *holokauston* (burnt whole). Due to internal accusations and state disorder post WWI, coupled with economic deprivation, hardship, and more, it was part of the reason why we see the ascent of Hitler and the Nazis. Hitler was appointed Chancellor in January 1933 and became *Führer* in August 1934, after he "amalgamated the office of president and took control of the armed forces" (Adelé-Marie, 2005). Further,

> resistance to the Nazis was crushed, and many dissidents were sent to concentration camps. The ubiquitous Gestapo kept tabs on the population, but the state was not characterized solely by repression by any means. In the first several years, Hitler was carried forward on a wave of disillusionment with the Weimar Republic, and a plebiscite showed that a solid majority of Germans approved of his actions. Almost on assuming political power, Hitler initiated actions against the Jews. They were turned into a race of "untouchables" within their own state, unable to pursue certain careers and a public life. The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 defined as Jewish anyone with one Jewish grandparent. That a terrible fate would be their lot was clear in Hitler's remarks that war in Europe would lead to the "extinction of the Jewish race in Europe." (Adelé-Marie, 2005)

No Jews were safe. The Nazis targeted all Jews, as the regime's primary goal was to exterminate every single Jew in the world and wipe out Judaism itself (Adelé-Marie, 2009). Once the Jews were gone, the Nazis were intent on systematically eliminating millions of others, scaffolding their victims to include the disabled, Jehovah's Witnesses, Catholics, African-Germans and Black-Germans, the Romani, the LGBTQ community, and many others (Adelé-Marie, 2009). For the non-Jewish victims of the Nazis, the regime

> classified Jews as the priority "enemy," the Nazi ideological concept of race targeted other groups for persecution, imprisonment, and annihilation, including Roma, people with disabilities, Poles, Soviet prisoners of war and Afro-Germans. The Nazis also identified political dissidents, Jehovah's Witnesses, Gay men, and others. The Nazis also used the term asocial. This was used, for example, for anyone that did not fit any of their other categories were asocial. These people were all seen as enemies and security risks either because they consciously opposed the Nazi regime, or some aspect of their behavior did not fit Nazi perceptions of social norms. They sought to eliminate domestic non-conformists and so-called racial threats through a perpetual self-purge of German society. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2019)

The Holocaust demonstrates the banality of human evil and challenges us to confront human behavior. When people do not stand up to aggressors, actions against their targets begin, and,

> because of the silence of the general and international populace, genocide emerges. Analysis of the regime's intent indicated that the Nazis – who had a psychic obsession with the Jews – intentionally chose the Jews first for separation, then removal, and then destruction. Adolf Hitler's objective (1889–1945) to obliterate the Jews and others designated as enemies of the state. Destruction was facilitated by acceptance, industry, and a failure by the world to intervene. Moreover, the Holocaust marked an industrialized nation that used the first-time advanced technology to commit mass murder on such an immense scale. (Adelé-Marie, 2009)

Even if people did not follow Nazi beliefs, or acted as impassive citizens (or, at worse, total bystanders), many were convinced because of what both Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl and author Diana Stirling referred to as the implied psychology of fear (Kohl, 2011).

Known as the "psychology of coercion," the Nazis used historical antisemitism, fear, projected hysteria, and coercion to "justify" actions against six million Jews and millions of others, even blaming the Jews for having brought the war upon Germany as seen with speeches given by Hitler and his cohorts (Kohl, 2011).

The Nazis would have 42,500 concentration camps, ghettos, and five killing centres (formerly known as extermination camps or death camps) to carry out unprecedented genocide. Unit two begins with a look at the origins of antisemitism and connects it with the Holocaust.

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## Unit Two: Antisemitism

### Introduction to the Subject of Antisemitism

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

"Once I thought that antisemitism had ended; today it is clear to me that it will probably never end." – Elie Wiesel (1928-2016)

Antisemitism has a long history, originating from the Ancient Roman Theodosian Code of 438 C.E. This code introduced anti-Jewish measures, restricting Jews from holding public-facing positions and beyond. Consequently, antisemitism has persisted into the modern era. Before beginning this chapter, I recommend that the reader pause, and watch this 14-minute film from the Echoes & Reflections video toolbox, linked here Antisemitism, and also found here: http://echoesandreflections.org/video_toolbox/?testvid=1 (Echoes and Reflections, 2021).

From a lesson that I had developed on antisemitism, I have explained to my students that a stereotype is a distorted generalization about a person or group. Stereotypes are particularly dangerous because they express very negative things about a group

of people (e.g., violent, greedy). Such stereotypes perpetuate hateful attitudes, hurt individuals, and damage entire communities. Antisemitism may take the form of rhetoric that proclaims the inferiority of Jews, their supposedly evil nature, or perpetrates other negative ideas about Jews. It may include political efforts to isolate, oppress, or otherwise injure them. It may also include prejudiced or other stereotyped views about Jews derived from hate or other harmful ideologies.

European antisemitism did not emerge suddenly in the modern era but developed over many centuries. Some of its roots can be traced to the late Roman Empire, where laws contained in the Theodosian Code increasingly limited the role of Jews in public life. These laws restricted access to certain government positions and reinforced the idea that Jews occupied a separate and inferior status within a Christian society. While the code also provided some legal protections for Jewish communities, it established patterns of exclusion that would continue in later centuries. As Christianity became more dominant throughout Europe, legal and social restrictions on Jews expanded,

contributing to the discrimination, segregation, and negative stereotypes that characterized much of medieval antisemitism. The legacy of these early laws helped shape attitudes that persisted long after the Roman Empire itself had disappeared.

What then are the stages to antisemitism and genocide?

Historian John Weiss established five stages of antisemitism in his essay "Antisemitism through the Ages," and he lists these stages:

> 1. Christian antisemitism (many reject this).
> 2. Commercial ("Jews were plagued for centuries by accusations that they innately preferred to exploit and manipulate others through dishonest commercial practices and usurious moneylending), economic crises of war.
> 3. Jews were associated with liberalism and progressivism. Failed revolution of 1848 to establish national political representation.
> 4. Anthropology (based on perceived and false racial differences, physical characteristics, intellect, and morality)
> 5. Ethnic nationalism. (Niewyk, 1997)

Note that racial antisemitism has its origins, as Weiss and others have noted, in Gregor Mendel and Charles Darwin's evolutionary theories. What stands out to me about antisemitism are those courageous survivors who fought – and still fight – against it.

One event was a stark reminder of what antisemitism leads to when my dear friend Magda Brown told me about a day in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which was covered by *The Washington Post*. *The Post* stated that "In times like these we look to our elders to sort things out, to put things in perspective" (Zak, 2018). Further, *The Post* cited how "Magda Brown has faced far worse than a country gone crazy with guns. She has a scarred bump on her left foot, from the wooden slippers at Auschwitz. Every step is a reminder" (Zak, 2018). Magda survived Auschwitz -Birkenau, Munchmuhle, in Stadtallendorf, and Buchenwald.

In 2018, as I was heading to Oakton to teach my class on the History of the Holocaust, I had just heard about the mass shootings in Pittsburgh at the Tree of Life synagogue. I thought, oh no – Magda was there or was on her way there to speak in the context of her work as a survivor. I thought she would postpone. I started my Holocaust class and had an idea to call Magda and put her on speaker to talk live with my students about what had happened. What occurred next was unexpected. I briefly spoke to Rochelle, Magda's daughter, and she put her mother on the phone.

Magda said that she could not talk, she was about to go through TSA at the airport. The entire class all asked her where are you going? She said “I am going to Pittsburgh! They need me more than ever before.” My students and I were in awe of her courage. This excerpt is from her website:

> in October 2018, Magda was scheduled to speak at Chatham University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The tragic shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue took place the day before. Magda didn’t hesitate to board the plane to Pittsburgh, saying, “Now the world needs to hear the message even more. Let’s go.” Magda’s experience was covered by and a variety of other media outlets, reaching millions of people. (Brown, 2021)

Magda’s determination to travel to Pittsburgh in the immediate aftermath of the attack left a lasting impression on my students and me. Her decision reflected not only remarkable courage but also an understanding that the lessons of the Holocaust remain urgently relevant.

For Holocaust survivors such as Magda, the tragedy at the Tree of Life synagogue was a painful reminder that antisemitism did not end with the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945. Rather, anti-Jewish hatred has persisted in different forms across generations

and societies. This reality raises an important historical question: how did such prejudices develop, and why have they proven so enduring? To answer these questions, historians have emphasized the importance of examining the long and complex history of antisemitism.

The Holocaust did not emerge suddenly or in isolation. Instead, it was rooted in centuries of religious, social, political, and racial prejudices that evolved over time and, under the Nazi regime, culminated in genocide. Before examining the rise of Hitler and the Nazi movement, students must first understand the historical foundations of antisemitism and the ways these ideas changed across different eras and societies.

Antisemitism remains a persistent and evolving form of prejudice. As Elie Wiesel observed, it has not disappeared. In her critical essay, historian Sherry Bard examines antisemitism, explains why it must be studied, and provides additional resources for further research and inquiry. Before moving on to the next section, pause here to read the essay Antisemitism (Echoes and

Reflections, 2026). It will be essential for understanding antisemitism and the role it played in the history of the Holocaust.

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# Will Antisemitism Ever End ?

*Sherry Bard*

It was just over 20 years ago, a few minutes before 11 a.m., when white supremacist Buford O. Furrow, Jr. walked into the lobby of the North Valley Jewish Community Center in Granada Hills, California, a few miles from where I live, and opened fire with a machine gun, firing 70 bullets. Five people were wounded, three children, a teenage counselor, and an office worker. After the shooter left the scene, he drove around and shot and killed a mail carrier and then fled the state before surrendering to authorities. As my family and friends watched in shock as the events unfolded on the news that day, we could not believe that this violent expression of hate was happening in our own backyard. The trauma of that memory remains with us today.

Several years later, in 2014, Holocaust survivor, scholar and author Elie Wiesel shared the following thoughts on the enduring nature of antisemitism and its ultimate consequence :

> "Once I thought that antisemitism had ended; today it is clear to me that antisemitism would probably never end. (Elie Wiesel, 2014).

**“Never again”**

Like many survivors, Elie Wiesel had hoped that after the Holocaust the world would have come to recognize the dangers of antisemitism, and that the often-uttered mantra, “never again,” would become a reality. However, as we know, genocides continue and antisemitism, the hatred that fueled the Holocaust, persists.

Today, we are witnessing an alarming rise in antisemitism, stoked by current political rhetoric and divisions. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, there are now more than 1,600 extremist groups operating across the country, many of which espouse antisemitic beliefs. These groups are spreading their messages of hate and recruiting new followers by leveraging online tools, including various social media platforms, many of which do not regulate their content. One such movement, Qanon, which has captured recent headlines for its global conspiracy theories and antisemitic undertones, was designated as a “domestic terror threat” by the FBI in 2019.

According to the Anti-Defamation League, since 2016, the United States has experienced a sharp and alarming rise in

antisemitic acts. In its Audit of Antisemitic Incidents 2020, the most recent report to date, there were more than 2,000 recorded incidents of violence, harassment and vandalism against Jews. While antisemitic incidents declined by 4% in 2020 as compared to the previous year, 2019 saw the largest number since ADL began tracking this data more than forty years ago.

**Why the Jews?**

The question of why people hate Jews is certainly perplexing and one we may never truly understand. Is it that people perceive Jews as different from themselves ? Elie Wiesel concluded that the endurance of antisemitism remains a mystery and described it as an "irrational disease."

The term "antisemitism" was first coined in Germany in the 19th century by Wilhelm Marr. Echoes & Reflections, an educational program and partnership of the Anti-Defamation League, USC Shoah Foundation, and Yad Vashem, defines it as hatred of Jews as a group or concept. To understand the meaning of "concept" in this definition, consider that while Jews today make up less than 1% of the world population, actually just .2%,

individuals can hold antisemitic beliefs without ever having met a Jewish person. These attitudes can be based on stereotypes, misinformation, and falsehoods. In other words, antisemitic attitudes can exist in places where there are few or no Jews residing.

**A new or old phenomenon?**

Antisemitism is undoubtedly not a new phenomenon. The late historian Robert Wistrich dubbed antisemitism "the longest hatred," given that it's been around for more than 2,000 years.

Throughout history, antisemitism has taken on different forms. It is influenced and shaped by the time and place in which it occurs as well as by culture, beliefs and events. However, there are key motifs or myths, that are constant. For example, Jews have been accused of being in league with the devil.

The roots of antisemitism date back to the beginning of Christianity. During this time, leaders in the Catholic hierarchy held Jews responsible for the crucifixion of Christ and believed that they deserved to be punished for not denouncing their faith and accepting Christianity.

Over time, Jews have been blamed for many of humanity's shortfalls and natural disasters. For example, during the Middle Ages, Jews were blamed for the Black Death and poisoning wells. We also saw the emergence of blood libels against the Jews during this time, another myth that endures today. Blood libel is the notion that Jews lure and kidnap Christian children to use their blood for Jewish rituals, such as making matzo (unleavened bread) for the Passover holiday. Today, there are those who believe that Jews were responsible for the 9/11 attacks and for the Covid-19 pandemic.

The most widely circulated and perhaps most notorious antisemitic publication is the book *Protocols of the Elders of Zion,* which was first published in 1905. It was said to be the secret minutes of a Jewish council meeting plotting world domination. In reality, the publication was a hoax carried out by the Russian secret police. Over the past century, this discredited document has been translated into dozens of languages and spread worldwide. Here in the United States, Henry Ford, the founder of Ford Motor Company, translated the document into English and printed it in

his newspaper, the *Dearborn Independent*, in the 1920s. Some today teach the *Protocols* as fact.

The Holocaust is certainly history's most extreme example of antisemitism. The innovation to antisemitism that was central to Nazi ideology were the ideas about race. The Nazis declared the Aryan race superior, pure, strong and good and the Jews demonic and inferior, intent on world domination. Moreover, Jews made up less than 1% of the population in Germany before World War II, and over 100,000 of them had fought for their country during World War I.

**How does hate spread?**

How did the Nazis spread their antisemitic messages? They took control of the media, including newspapers and radio, to spread hateful propaganda about the Jews. In addition to adults, children were a key target audience. Teachers were required to join the Nazi Party, and Nazi ideology was taught in school.

The theoretical aspects of race education were thought to be complex for young children to grasp, so the Nazis used familiar devices such as fairytales to help children more easily understand

and embrace antisemitism. An example is *The Poisonous Mushroom,* which was published in 1938 by Julius Streicher. The book focuses on the corrupt and evil nature of Jews. It uses the mushroom as a metaphor for Jews proclaiming that it is very hard to distinguish between poisonous mushrooms and edible ones and that they can spread all over the place without control, just like the Jews.

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, additional antisemitic ideas have taken hold including denial and distortion of the Holocaust. This can range from the assertion that the Holocaust didn't happen, to accusations that the number of Jews murdered is greatly exaggerated. In addition, there are those who say that there were no gas chambers, and that people died of natural causes, even though the Holocaust is perhaps the most widely documented event in history, much of which was detailed by the perpetrators themselves. Deniers say that Jews lie about the Holocaust in order to get money and to have a State (Israel). Another recent idea being spread is termed the "New Antisemitism," which is the delegitimization and demonization of Israel and its people.

**Where do we go from here?**

On October 27, 2018, we witnessed the attack on the Tree of Life Synagogue, in Pittsburgh, in which 11 worshippers were murdered and six others injured. Two years later, Audrey Glickman, who survived the shooting told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette that "When Jews say of the departed, 'may their memory be for a blessing,' the word 'for' is crucial - moving from memory to future action. The people we lost have a legacy," she said. "It's on us now to continue to not only build ourselves but build on the legacy that was left to us" (Smith, 2021).

In a recent interview on CBS This Morning, Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO of the Anti-Defamation League made the following remark about contemporary antisemitism and how he thinks we need to respond: "I think we're now moving into a dangerous new phase and it is going to require government and business and civil society to work hand in hand to lock arms to push back on the surge of prejudice" (Greenblatt, 2021).

Rising antisemitism is a bellwether, a warning sign of issues that can have far-reaching and long-lasting effects. As Samantha

Power, author and former ambassador to the United Nations notes, "Rising anti-Semitism is rarely the lone or the last expression of intolerance in a society" (Power, 2014).

Her statement reminds us that if antisemitism and other forms of hatred are ever going to end, we have to be vigilant. And, as Elie Wiesel warned,

> We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men and women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must – at that moment – become the center of the universe (Wiesel, 2014).

As a society, perhaps our most critical obligation is to remember that we are all interconnected and need stand up for one other.

**Note**: Throughout this article, the term antisemitism is written as both antisemitism and anti-Semitism. The author has chosen the version "antisemitism," which is how the Anti-Defamation League expresses this term. Anti-Semitism was used only when it was part

of a quote. Visit the Anti-Defamation League for more information.

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The horror of the Holocaust is not that it deviated from human norms; the horror is that it didn't. What happened may happen again, to others not necessarily Jews, perpetrated by others, not necessarily Germans. We are all possible victims, possible perpetrators, possible bystanders.

Quote attributed to Yehuda Bauer, scholar, author, historian, and survivor (1926-2024)

## Unit Three: The Backgrounds to and Stages of Genocide

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

Author and attorney Raphael Lemkin in 1933 wanted an international treaty against genocide. In 1944, he defined the word genocide in his book, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. Genocide is defined as the systematic destruction of a nation or ethnic group via direct or indirect means. How does genocide start? There are answers and many nuances to the subject, but we can begin to approach the topic in this way by scaffolding the topic.

Hate can be emotional, reactive, and stir up sentiments such as anger and blame. If something is going badly for an individual, or if a collective group has an issue about anything, whether micro or macro, hate can lead to blaming, and that need to blame someone for whatever the group is upset about can quickly lead to crimes against humanity. Hate is historical, as are abuses, colonization, enslavement, racism, torture, separation, segregation, and assignation of blame. Jews and others have been targeted for millennia. Genocide has occurred since ancient times, as historian R.J. Rummel wrote about in his work *Power Kills*. Rummel noted

how propaganda led him to draw false and dangerous information about specific groups as a young student. Rummel (1997) further elaborated that he was driven to undertake quantitative research to understand how genocide and mass murder has killed more people than war. Rummel (1997) combines the words genocide and mass murder into the word *democide*, meaning murder of an unprecedent scale. In *Power Kills*, which has been digitized, he outlines how many tens of millions of people worldwide have been killed as a result of democide. Rummel (1997) noted the origins of how he began his research and how the word democide emerged:

> My true interest was in understanding and doing something about the legal killing called war and it was a happy surprise to discover that I could actually focus my studies on the history, conditions, and causes of war. Through undergraduate and graduate term papers, my MA thesis and Ph.D. dissertation in 1963, and the research since, this has been my ultimate concern. This research has taken numerous paths and has expanded to understand violence and conflict generally and their possible explanations, but always down the road and until recent years I hoped to have something specific to recommend about ending war. But in the mid-1980s I was shocked to discover that several times more people were killed in democide (genocide and mass murder) by governments than died in warfare. And with that my aim broadened to help end or at least lessen this killing as well. This book presents the sum of that research. And, I believe, I finally can offer what appears a most realistic and practical

> solution to war, democide, and other collective violence. (Rummel, 1997, para. 11)

So then, how did Hitler kill millions of people? The essay: Without Hitler, would there have been a Holocaust? By Sir Ian Kershaw, explores this topic. Further, to understand the logic behind the statement, no Hitler, no Holocaust, consider that "the Holocaust took place because individuals, groups, and nations made decisions to act or not to act" (USHMM, 2021). Rummel also explained that

> Genocide is foremost an international crime for which individuals, no matter how high in authority, may be indicted, tried, and punished by the International Criminal Court (ICC). According to Article 6 of the ICC Statute, This crime involves, "any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:
>
> (a) Killing members of the group;
>
> (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
>
> (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
>
> (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

> (f) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. (Rummel, 2019)

Rummel (2013) further suggested that in addition to the six million Jews killed by the Nazis, that the regime was responsible for upwards of 20,000,000 deaths.

Rummel used a picture from the Nuremberg Trials to show how the Nazis calculated how countless peoples they murdered, noting that although the Nazis destroyed many records, enough remained intact that documented ongoing genocide during war, which Rummel classified as a democide.

Dated from January of 1942, this image with an overview of Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russia, the *Einsatzgruppe A* [task forces, special action groups] note by the coffins how many Jews they killed. In Estonia, they wrote the word *Judenfrei* (Jew free), which means it was free of Jews.

(International Military Tribunal's Office of the United States Chief of Counsel For Prosecution of Axis Criminality, 1946).

The above crude map clearly outlined both intent and aftermath. How do governments convince ordinary people to perpetrate such horrific crimes? There are stages of genocide, and propaganda plays a key role in introducing, implementing, and denying genocide. Whether propaganda is presented in images, film, radio addresses or speeches, it can be effective. Nazi propaganda was certainly used to perpetrate genocide. Here, we will look at some examples of Nazi propaganda images.

Below is an image from the children's book *The Poisonous Mushroom* (*Der Giftpilz)* that the Nazis created for children. Here,

the Jew is portrayed as a poisonous mushroom, noting it is impossible to ascertain among the mushrooms – standing in for Jews – who are good and who are bad. The implication is why take a chance on any of these mushrooms? If one cannot be trusted to be safe, how can any be trusted at all?

(Echoes & Reflections, 2021).

Here is another propaganda image developed by the Nazis to falsely depict Jews as a threat to children:

(Echoes & Reflections, 2021).

The pictures show that Nazis wanted to portray the Jews as a threat to Aryan children. Echoes & Reflections stated that this image, also taken from *The Poisonous Mushroom*, states: “Here my little one, you get something very sweet, but as a reward you both must come with me” (Echoes & Reflections, 2021). Thus, the image was a threat to all parents who feared that something would happen to their children. Another image alleges to show contrast between an Aryan man and a Jewish man:

(Echoes & Reflections, 2021).

The Aryan is presented as strong and fit, with a clear gaze. In contrast, the Jewish man is falsely depicted as out of shape, unclean, and with a strange look in his eyes. Propagandic images such as the ones above classified the Jews as treacherous.

The Nazis continually classified Jews as enemies and dangerous. Symbolization was used to further antisemitism. Jews were discriminated against and dehumanized through various ways, from legal, as seen in the 1935 passage of the Nuremberg Laws. The Nazis organized actions against Jews, polarized them from German and later European society. Preparation for the

Holocaust began when the Nazis established the first concentration camp, Dachau, built in March 1933. Persecution of the Jews and others had been ongoing since the regime came to power and escalated. Extermination began in earnest with the killing centres (formerly known as extermination camps). However, millions died in the ghettos and concentration camps, which the Nazis had, in total, 42,500. Denial began during the Holocaust and continues to this day. Here are the ten stages of genocide:

> Ten stages of genocide:
>
> 1. Classification.
> 2. Symbolization.
> 3. Discrimination.
> 4. Dehumanization.
> 5. Organization.
> 6. Polarization.
> 7. Preparation.
> 8. Persecution.
> 9. Extermination.
> 10. Denial. (Stanton, 2016)

In the case of the Nazi genocide, known as the Holocaust, all ten stages existed. Denial is rightfully listed as the tenth stage of genocide. To deny is to defy logic. For the Nazis, xenophobic agrarian-oriented ideology dictated a need to cleanse the German race by the complete annihilation of all Jews through genocide.

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# Genocide and Holocaust as an Outgrowth of the Political, Economic, Social, Ideological, and International Crises of the Twentieth Century

*Leon Stein and Wendy Adelé-Marie with comments by Daniel Patrick Brown*

Ideological movements and dictatorships perpetrated genocides and the Holocaust, including genocide against the Armenians in 1915, genocide in Soviet Russia in 1929 and 1932, Nazi Germany in 1933, Communist Cambodia in 1975, and the Bosnian genocide that began in 1992. Gregory Stanton, Ph.D., scholar and founder of Genocide Watch, developed a website that scaffolds the stages of genocide, which can be accessed here: https://www.genocidewatch.com/ (a note of caution for the reader: Genocide Watch graphic depiction and discussion on past, current, and projected genocides, that include statistics, images and more). On that website, current concerns and ongoing genocidal acts and actions are listed. Stanton has updated calls for action, including the persecution of LGBTQ+ communities, to the use of chemical weapons against innocent civilians. The current world situation is grievous, and Stanton's site calls for action, for the world never to

forget and to act.

Facilitating genocide can emerge as an act of government, and genocidal regimes will frequently develop a system of propaganda and indoctrination that appealed to a cross-section of their societies, promising both salvation and rewards to the perpetrators. For example, the Turks referred to the Armenians as a dire threat, the Soviets and Cambodians made war on the peasants and middle class as "class enemies," and the Nazis characterized the Jews as "satanic vermin" that had to be wiped off the face of the earth.

In the context of this essay, Daniel Patrick Brown and Adele Marie discussed other genocides of the past 100 years. Brown noted the Rwandan genocide of April-July 1994, which was an incredibly vicious effort to annihilate the Tutsi people (hatchets, hoes, and machetes were most often the weapon used to kill the Tutsis). The Hutu media, particularly *Radio Television Libre des Milie Colines* (RTLM), began a campaign in early 1993 of targeting the Tutis as *inyenzi* (translated roughly as "cockroaches"). Just as references to the Soviet "class enemies,"

the Nazis' "satanic vermin," and the Turks' concern for their so-called "internal security," helped pave the way for the mass murder of objectified targets, the preparation for the Rwanda genocide required the Hutus to generate venomous hatred for their victims.

Also, the Rwandan genocide had its roots in the European colonization of Africa in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century. In Rwanda's case, the clash between the Hutus and Tutsis was partly the result of the clash between the Belgians and the German occupiers of Burundi. Brown also noted that What is so chilling about the Rwandan genocide is that the death toll is so difficult to discern as it was just mass carnage at an unimaginable level for about three months.

Social and economic crises caused by social revolution and the great depression enabled these regimes to power. Wars and international crises provided the preconditions, facilitated, and triggered the genocides. The First World War was one causal factor for the Armenian genocide, the Soviet war on the peasants and Ukrainians was prompted by fear of war, and the Vietnam War facilitated the Cambodian genocide. These genocides were led by

fanatical leaders who coordinated the government's army, bureaucracy, police, and propaganda branches.

Often motivated by extreme nationalism, and in the case of the Nazis, total annihilation coupled with racism, these leaders and their governments were collectively responsible for the deaths of tens of millions. Historian R.J. Rummel referred to these governments as megamurders. These governments often classified their victims in such a way as to give the appearance that removal and murder were necessary functions to ensure the safety of the rest of the populace.

Arguably, genocide was also used as an instrument of control, subjugation and, especially with the Nazis, allowed for the development of "ordinary men" – indeed, even women – into murderous perpetrators. As each country became involved with civil unrest or war, combat created an atmosphere of crisis, destroyed critical thinking, blurred the distinction between soldiers and civilians, and provided an opportunity for total domination and imperial expansion. All these forces combined to make the twentieth century the age of genocide and the Holocaust.

**Unit Four: Nazi Genocide**

## Nazi Intent: The Holocaust

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

The Holocaust was not inevitable. However, the intent to murder the Jews was always foremost in early Hitlerian policies; validation of this theory comes from Hitler himself, Historian Sir Ian Kershaw, the world's most renowned expert on Adolf Hitler confirms Hitler's intent, noting that Hitler was not sure *how* it would be accomplished, but that it *would* be accomplished. In a 1920 meeting of the NSDAP, Hitler stated that

> for us, this is not a problem you can turn a blind eye to-one to be solved by small concessions. For us, it is a problem of whether our nation can ever recover its health, whether the Jewish spirit can ever really be eradicated. Don't be misled into thinking you can fight a disease without killing the carrier, without destroying the bacillus. (Stein, 2019)

In a 2009 interview with historian Laurence Rees, Kershaw noted that "the aim of destroying the power of the Jews, shall we say, was there right from the very beginning. How this would be undertaken, nobody knew, not even Hitler" (Rees, 2009).

Consider Hitler's words in his 1925 book, *Mein Kampf* [My Struggle]:

> if at the outbreak and during the war, twelve or fifteen thousand of these Hebrew nation-corruptors had been held under poison gas once, as hundreds of thousands of our best German workers from all classes and callings had to endure on the battlefield, then the sacrifice of millions on the front would not have been in vain.

Hitler also said in *Mein Kampf* [My Struggle]:

> on the contrary: twelve thousand scoundrels eliminated at the right time would perhaps have saved the lives of a million Germans who are more orderly and more valuable for the future.

Kershaw (2009) stated that once Hitler became Chancellor in January 1933, that the intent was to expel the Jews from Germany, but that once the war was underway, the Nazis then had to address what they called the Jewish question. Hitler and the Nazis had both power, authority, and later, developed a totalitarian state by the end of August 1934. The 1935 passage of the Nuremberg Laws was a blueprint that made the Holocaust possible. Then, before the war, the Nazis implemented genocidal policies within Germany itself. The Nazi concentration camps and killing centres originated with the planning and development of a concentration camp called Dachau, near Munich, Germany, in March of 1933. Dachau would be the prototype of the Nazi concentration camps and later killing centres. After Dachau, in 1933, the very first year that the Nazis

came to power, they had already constructed over 100 camps “to imprison political opponents and other undesirables” (The Jewish Virtual Library, 2018). Concentration camps were designed as inmate holding facilities and were used as a labor source.

Several of the concentration camps also provided the Nazi doctors with human subjects for medical and other experimentation. Prisoners were held in the concentration camps until they were selected for euthanasia or died of disease or illness. The exclusive purpose of the killing centres was to kill. The concentration and later establishment of the five killing centres became a highly organized ideological and bureaucratic enterprise of abuse, humiliation, torture, and murder.

In some instances, flowcharts were created for the Nazis to follow in order to achieve maximum output of death. The creation of the Nazi camps was also significant in that, for the first time in history, a form of technological slaughter was utilized to kill the Jews, and any other people the Nazis targeted as undesirables simply because they existed. Once Nazi Germany began to break their borders, more Jews were targeted, as “attacks

had been happening in Nazi Germany's occupied territories for years" (Boissoneault, 2016).

For more, review:

- 7 March 1936 Hitler reoccupies the Rhineland (film, caution) The soldiers were ordered to retreat if France retaliated; they did not, so Nazi Germany advanced and reoccupied the Rhineland.
- In August 1936, Germany hosted the Summer Olympics.
- Two years later, Nazi Germany expanded its reach by annexing Austria and parts of Czechoslovakia.
- Then review: the Anschluss, or annexation of Austria, 12 March 1938; Mauthausen, the largest concentration camp in Austria opened in August 1938.

This quote is from material as coming from a USHMM educational resource attributed to Martin Smith, noted:

> "Intensified persecution in Germany led more Jews to try to emigrate, which required a nation to allow them to enter. In response to increased refugee demand, US President Franklin D. Roosevelt convened a conference in Evian, France. There, representatives from 32 nations discussed their immigration policies. Delegate after delegate expressed sympathy for the refugees, but most countries, including the United States, refused to alter their immigration policies to admit more of them. Only the Dominican Republic agreed to accept a large number of additional refugees. The Evian conference did not do much to save people. Only the Dominican Republic agreed to take in refugees. No Czechoslovak representative was even invited to the conference. After Evian, an area rapidly formed along the borders of East-Central European states,

> which was called a no man's land. Smaller or larger groups of people were forced to camp alongside roads, on fields, in dilapidated buildings, between border posts, internment camps, or open ghettos. Consequently, a primary casualty of the Evian conference was the annexation of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, where Germany invaded without firing a shot."

What happened next? People were then trapped. In what became known as the Munich Pact, there was an agreement to the Nazi annexation of the Sudetenland in exchange for a pledge of peace from Hitler. Thousands of Jews (est 4000-17,000) were trapped in an area, as seen in this short film courtesy of the USHMM, called "No Man's Land" Countries passed laws against Jews living in other areas, which resulted in mass migration, and confusion, with no end in sight; hear from a survivor in this film: Irene Miller.

After the 1939 invasion of Poland, the advent of genocide emerged into an intensity unimaginable in human history. Kershaw said that after 1939, Nazi "policies became more extreme, more radical, and more genocidal" and that from September 1939 to June 1941, "in those 18 months an immense radicalization in the direction of genocide had already taken place" that would result in

the murder of six million Jews (Rees, 2009). Kershaw also stated that

> the 'Final Solution' as it came about might have come about in different ways, because the original notion was you deport Europe's Jews into the Soviet Union and there they will starve to death or they will be worked to death or whatever, over a long period of time in the icy wastes of the Soviet Union and they will die out. It was genocidal by a different route. And, of course, in the meanwhile the Soviet Jews had largely been shot. So, genocide was there implicit in that attack on the Soviet Union, and nobody really attempted to hide this at all in the German leadership. (Rees, 2009)

Kershaw explained that the intent was there over a decade before Hitler was appointed as Chancellor and that once he came to power, his actions against his enemies were, at first, carefully scaffolded in its intensity as laws were passed that enabled the government to act against its people. Eventually, the Nazis targeted millions for extermination. Five million non-Jewish victims would perish at the hands of the Nazis; these groups included gay men, Communists, Socialists, resisters, POWs, members of religious institutions, the disabled, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, African-Germans, the Roma and Sinti, criminals, and many more.

Victims were categorized as sub-human, akin to vermin or a bacterium. No one was left untouched if they were classified as asocial or an enemy of the state. Importantly, as Kershaw explains, after the invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, there was a shift in Nazi policy:

> once it didn't work out in terms of the Nazi vision of totally destroying the Soviet Union and having this option of pushing the European Jews into it then, of course, the actual genocide that came out with this so-called 'Final Solution' took place in extermination units on Polish soil which was something that was devised as the war in the East didn't go according to plan in the autumn and the winter of 1941-2. But genocide was there absolutely as a central point of this war in the East and therefore you could say that genocide was a central component of the Second World War itself. (Rees, 2009).

In January 1942, at the Wannsee Conference, the decision was made to implement the Final Solution: all of the Jews were to die. However, how could one group led by one man convince a populace to murder millions?

Even if people did not follow Nazi beliefs, or acted as impassive citizens, some historians have suggested that many in Germany were convinced of the *implied legitimacy of the laws* because of the aforementioned concept known as the implied psychology of fear. Again, Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl

investigated this theory, as have many other psychologists and historians. Known as the psychology of coercion, using historical antisemitism, fear, and projected hysteria, the Nazis used coercion to falsely "justify" actions against the Jews and others, as well as for the war itself, guising it under the quest for the return of land lost after the First World War, then,

As Adelé-Marie stated, "In the first several years, Hitler was carried forward on a wave of disillusionment with the Weimar Republic, and a plebiscite showed that a solid majority of Germans approved of his actions" (Adelé-Marie, 2005). Millions stood by while people went to the camps. People left and never came back. People were both passive and intentional bystanders to these disappearances.

According to Gregory Mullins, professor of educational leadership at the University of the Cumberlands, the term *authority* is often used interchangeably with *power* in government. However, their meanings differ: *Power* is defined as "the ability to influence somebody to do something that he/she would not have done" (Mullins, 2020). *Authority* refers to a claim

of legitimacy, the justification and right to exercise that power. Mullins (2020) while a mob believes they may hold power to punish a criminal, people who believe in the rule of law consider that only a court of law has the authority to punish a criminal.

As Mullins (2020) suggests, if a mob becomes legitimate, and ascends to power, twist then destroy laws, implements their own, and then acts against that former mob's categorized enemies - this is now a basic sketch of the Nazis. Mullins (2020) further noted that

- Power is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his or her own will - Max Weber
- A has power over B to the extent that he or she can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do - Robert Dahl

Does Mullins' interpretation of Weber and Dahl then suggest people blindly follow authority because of power? Or does following authority also come from a place of fear?

When using chronology and historical constructs that demonstrated how historical antisemitism, combined with the advent of the Nazi party, and then the passage of the subsequent Nuremberg Laws, how these all came together with the result

emerging as one of the most racist, horrifically violent regimes in history. The Holocaust was absolutely not inevitable.

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# From Legal Exclusion to Systematic Genocide: Key Questions and Themes

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

The development of Nazi persecution did not occur in a single step but through a gradual process in which law, ideology, and social practice became increasingly intertwined. The early visual and lived realities of the ghettos already reflect this trajectory, functioning as an indication of the direction Nazi policy would take in what they termed the "Final Solution." Jewish populations were progressively isolated and dehumanized before being deported to killing centres. A key turning point in this process was the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, which stripped German Jews of citizenship and legal protections and established a formal structure for exclusion that made later measures possible.

As the system expanded, it became evident that persecution was not confined to isolated sites but was instead embedded in a wide and coordinated network across occupied Europe. Ghettos themselves varied in structure, including open, closed, and so-called destruction ghettos, each reflecting differing stages and intensities of control. Within this broader framework, attention

must also be given to the range of human responses. Bystanders, who neither participated directly nor intervened, occupied a significant space in this history, while upstanders demonstrated that resistance and assistance, though limited and dangerous, were possible.

The impact of these policies is particularly evident in the experiences of children. The *Kindertransport* illustrates one of the few organized efforts that enabled some children to escape, while the broader demographic reality remains that approximately 1.5 million Jewish children were murdered. Survivor accounts and personal narratives further underscore the long-term consequences of these events, both for individuals and for collective memory. At the same time, Nazi persecution extended beyond Jewish populations to include Roma and Sinti, people with disabilities, political prisoners, Jehovah's Witnesses, LGBTQ individuals, and others classified as "asocial" or racially undesirable under Nazi ideology.

Resistance took different forms across Europe, ranging from small acts of defiance to organized protest. One such example

was the Rosenstrasse demonstration in Berlin; from February 27 to March 6, 1943, a group of non-Jewish German women - mostly relative - demanded the release of 1,800 to 2,000 Jewish men detained in the Rosenstrasse 2-4 building. According to the USHMM, the majority of the men were released, although some were sent to Auschwitz. Despite facing the immense danger of arrest or execution, these women successfully resisted. However, the USHMM also notes that "the Gestapo never intended to deport 'mixed-marriage' Jews and fully intended to incarcerate these Jews in forced-labor camps in the Reich." This nuance is crucial, demonstrating the importance of consulting primary sources to uncover the exact reality of an event rather than relying on oversimplified historical narratives. (USHMM, *Rosenstrasse*, 2021) What about other responses?

International responses, including the Évian Conference, reveal the broader failure of many nations to provide refuge, a failure that contributed to the entrapment of thousands. Mass atrocities such as the Rumbula killings further demonstrate the scale and systematic nature of violence in the occupied East. Taken

together, these events highlight how administrative structures, ideological commitments, and social conditions combined to make genocide possible, while also revealing moments in which moral choice and resistance did emerge.

This framework helps clarify how the Holocaust developed through stages of exclusion rather than a single moment of decision. In the following essay, Emily Minerof considers how the Nuremberg Laws functioned as a legal foundation for these developments, and raises broader questions about how antisemitism became normalized within everyday life and why opposition remained limited even as persecution intensified.

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# How the Nuremberg Laws Led to the Holocaust

*Emily Minerof*

Imagine waking up on September 15th, 1935 and you no longer have the same basic human rights as your neighbor that you've lived next to for years, shared meals with, and let your children grow up with. The Nuremberg Laws just passed, making the Jews and other targeted minority groups second-class citizens in their home country (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2000). The Nuremberg Laws prevented Jews from marrying/having children with Germans in order to physically progress the Aryan race and dehumanize the Jews. Implementing these laws was "a major step in clarifying racial policy and removing Jewish influences from Aryan society" (Jewish Virtual Library, n.d.a). What could have been a semi-normal morning in post-World War One (WWI) Germany, became the day the Holocaust was made legal. The enactment of the Nuremberg Laws can be considered a definitive act of Nazi intent to perpetrate the Holocaust because they were the racially discriminative laws that

took away the German Citizenship of Jews. This law set a baseline for more dehumanizing laws to be created regarding Jews.

The authors of the Nuremberg Laws wrote them with the knowledge that the Holocaust would be perpetrated but were not necessarily aware of the end result of mass extermination. More specifically, they were aware of the purification of the Aryan race rather than the plan to exterminate the Jews. The authors knew that these laws would racially classify and isolate the Jews. When author Wilhelm Stuckart was made aware that the Nuremberg Laws were ignored in the Final Solution, he "pointed out the bureaucratic problems of such a radical course of action - insisting that mandatory sterilization would be a better option in preserving the "spirit" of the Nuremberg laws" (Jewish Virtual Library, n.d.b). This evidence shows that Stuckart knew the severity of the laws he had helped write but certainly did not foresee or agree with the Final Solution being executed. Despite the knowledge of the authors and whether they willingly perpetrated the Holocaust, Adolf Hitler told them otherwise.

It is noted that "Hitler claimed during a Reichstag session that the Nuremberg Laws would actually help the Jews by creating "a level ground on which the German people may find a tolerable relation with the Jewish people." Hitler's statement was a "blatant deception, aimed at the outside world" (Jewish Virtual Library, n.d.a). Although the authors may have been aware that Hitler's "outside" motives were not exactly true, they may have not been made aware that Hitler would use the Nuremberg Laws as a "precursor to other more degrading decrees" in the future" (Jewish Virtual Library, n.d.a). This can be seen when authors "Stuckart and his assistant, Dr. Hans Globke, in the RMI [Reich Ministry of the Interior] claimed that Nazi racial laws differed little from Jewish law: "The German people want to keep their blood pure and their culture together just like the Jews have done since the prophet Ezra ordered them to do so" (Jewish Virtual Library, n.d.a). This explanation provided by the authors shows no indication of mass extermination of the Jews, but only to create an Aryan race. Despite the knowledge of Hitler's ideologies outlined in his book *Mein Kampf*, the Final Solution was not discussed until

1941, and "even in his inner circle, Hitler could never bring himself to speak with outright frankness about the killing of Jews" (Kershaw, 2011, p. 29).

Unfortunately, the Nuremberg Laws were not the first set of laws/clauses that targeted Jews in their own country. Since the end of WWI, Jews have been the scapegoat for the loss of the war during the end of the Weimar Republic and the start of the Third Reich. These laws/clauses paved the foundation and societal acceptance for the Nuremberg Laws to exist. When Hitler was still Chancellor under President Paul von Hindenburg, an emergency clause known as the Reichstag Fire Decree took away the basic rights of citizens after the Reichstag building was "mysteriously" burnt down (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2000). Hitler's rise to power required the political climate Germany displayed after the loss of the war. After WWI, the Weimar Republic democracy declined, Germany faced the repercussions of the loss of WWI and struggled financially due to an economic crisis. Hitler had established dictatorship after the Enabling Act was passed on March 23rd, 1933 (United States Holocaust

Memorial Museum, 2000). Thus, he became the *Führer* after he assumed presidency (Adelé-Marie, 2018a). This meant that he had full dictatorship over Germany. A sense of German nationalism was weak among the people and they were desperate for any change, even if it exploited antisemitic ideologies.

Once Hitler had full power as *Führer*, nothing could stop him from doing what he wanted despite the illegalities this caused. The Nazi party began to boycott Jewish businesses in April of 1933. Over the next several months, laws were enacted that directly impacted the lives of Jews and other groups the Nazis targeted. Laws such as the Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service, Law on the Revocation of Naturalization, Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases, and the criminalization of gay acts among men were enacted (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2000). These laws: prevented Jews from having jobs, Roma of German citizenship, and legalized sterilization of the disabled which eventually led to the legal euthanasia of the terminally ill. Books by Jews were burned publicly to eliminate foreign influence

and protect the German sense of Nationalism (Adelé-Marie, 2018a). Having ideas were no longer free, actions were no longer free, and you had to look a certain way. There were more than four hundred decrees and regulations that made the personal lives and public lives of Jews difficult during the first six years of Hitler's dictatorship (Adelé-Marie, 2018c).

Hitler was able to create a society where these laws were considered "the norm" through excessive use of Nazi propaganda in varying forms and the incremental laws put into place over time. As each law passed, "the norm changed", and this partly explains why there was a general acceptance of them. The Nazi Party was able to dismantle democracy through a combination of political, economic, and emotional circumstances that all happened in a short, overlapping time period. The shared feeling of a lack of German nationalism after the loss of the war created a loss of faith in the Weimar Republic democracy. Hitler started the Nazi Party in 1919 but failed miserably for almost ten years before slowly gaining power. Many people did not see the Nazi Party as a threat. Hitler emphasized a strong sense of nationalism, and the German

people wanted that back. This is one reason why people were willing to give up their personal freedoms. Another reason is that Hitler made specific groups of people, such as women, feel important to the cause, for example, giving women the right to vote in a time where women were considered inferior to men (Boak, 2003). In terms of importance, the diffusion of responsibility greatly contributed to the lack of response from other religious groups and countries and what they valued as important.

The narrative from *Defining a Jew* as referenced in Wendy Adelé-Marie's online readings discusses the responsibility among Christians and their interpretation of their religion in regard to the Jews and other targeted groups during the Holocaust (Adelé-Marie, 2018d). Since the Church defined the "love thy neighbor" commandment to only extend to other baptized Christians, Christians felt guilty that they didn't help the Jews. For the most part, the response from other countries and groups was relatively similar in that they did nothing, but for different reasons. Although Dietrich Goldschmidt admits why German Christians "couldn't"

feel responsible for helping the Jews, that did not stop the French Protestant Congregation in the Village of Le Chambon sur Lignon. Many people in this community felt it was their Christian obligation to save the Jews, their neighbors in need, and risked their lives to do so (Yad Vashem, n.d.).

In terms of Pope Pius XII and his non-response to the Holocaust as a religious figure, "he wanted to play peacemaker during the war… To safeguard his credentials for such a role… to preserve the Vatican City's status as an independent state and neutral government" (Phayer, 2011, p. 243). What this really meant was that no stance was taken, and with the influence of the Church, many more Jewish lives could have been saved if the Church simply involved itself with politics. This was Goldschmidt's initial finding; the Church did not involve itself in politics and therefore it was not in any way responsible for attempting to save the Jews. Overall, the Church could have had a significant influence on the number of bystanders during the Holocaust.

Most of the world failed to react because other countries could not comprehend the severity of what was happening in Nazi-occupied Europe. There had never been an event "in recent European history for the murderous character of German National Socialism" which left responders caught off guard and unprepared (Laqueur, 2011, p. 253). It is also believed that despite knowing information about the Final Solution, it was not believed (Laqueur, 2011). In the Evian Conference convened by American President Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR), thirty-two countries were represented, and most did not change their immigration policies to help Jews emigrate from Eastern Europe (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2000). FDR chose to be cautious because "Germany still owed American investors billions of dollars, borrowed to pay World War I reparations, and Roosevelt did not believe that the United States should intervene in the internal affairs of another country" (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d.). Despite the changes made to this opinion later, it was clear that the existence of Jews in Europe was not the interest of FDR.

Hitler created the Nuremberg Laws with the intention to create more laws. In order "to create his homogeneous and harmonious Aryan society, Hitler had first to discard the Jews, a "people" incompatible with "true Germans." The Nuremberg Laws helped Hitler take the first step toward getting rid of "these parasites" and imposing racial conformity on society" (Jewish Virtual Library, n.d.a). The result of the Nuremberg Laws were more laws that defined a Jew. Wendy Adelé-Marie touches on "The Ten Stages of Genocide" by Dr. Gregory H. Stanton in her online readings. The Ten Stages of Genocide outline the steps in the order necessary to perpetrate genocide, and the first step is "Classification" (Adelé-Marie, 2018b). Classification in these terms defined an "us" and "them". Jews were classified as "them" by being forced to identify themselves by the yellow "Jude" patch on their clothes. The Nuremberg Laws inevitably opened the doors for laws to be made to determine what a Jew was. For the Nuremberg Laws to outlaw interracial marriage among Jews and Germans, "Jew" had to be defined. The chart created by the Nazis intended to classify the Jews from the "Aryan" ideal by any means

necessary, even if it was not physically observable. People were defined as mixed-race Jews, known as “Mischlings,” based upon their grandparents and parents’ “race” (Adele Marie, 2018d). Today, many might question why people simply listened to this Nazi propaganda and how it is even reasonable to classify people based on removed generations of their family.

The Nuremberg Laws perpetuated the Holocaust by creating the foundation for legal persecution of the Jews via obedience. Those who complied yet disagreed with these laws were vital to the dehumanization of the Jews because nothing was being done to actively save the Jews. In the following statement, “Obedience to law was the main reason why Germans and their allies killed Jews and others during the Holocaust” this means that simply not negating the law was violent towards the Jews. People who did not actively contribute to resistance, whether it was violent or non-violent participated in compliance with the law. Although it is not as simple as resisting or complying, but rather risking fatal consequences in order to potentially save the lives of others. The diffusion of responsibility plays a crucial role in the

Holocaust and the obedience of Nazi Germany. The more people who complied with the laws, the less responsible each individual felt for the atrocities that were occurring. Metaphorically, the Nuremberg Laws can be considered the gust of wind that pushed the tumbleweed. These laws put a foot in the door for the future of Jews to be terrorized, and eventually victims in a mass extermination. Without the Nuremberg Laws, it is uncertain that the ultimate consequence Final Solution of the Holocaust would have been permitted.

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# Nazi Genocide: Medical Experimentation

*Ellie Pearlman*

The following essay by Ellie Pearlman explores the origins of Nazi eugenics, tracing its roots back to the early 19th century. It examines influential figures such as Charles Darwin, Francis Galton, Ernst Haeckel, Alfred Ploetz, and Houston Stewart Chamberlain, and the development of pseudo-scientific racial theories such as Nordicism and Aryanism. This essay sheds light on the ideological foundations that laid the groundwork for the implementation of horrific eugenics policies during the Nazi regime. Consider that Jews entered into finance professions as it was one of only a few ways that they could make a living, since many countries had antisemitic laws in place, many of which were rooted in the Theodosian Code.

## The History of Nazi Eugenics

As a consequence of the Beer Hall Putsch, a failed coup d'état he attempted in 1923, Adolf Hitler was convicted of high treason and served several months in prison. During his time, Hitler wrote an autobiographical manifesto called *Mein Kampf*

('My Struggle'), published in 1925 (USHMM, 2015). With his political career at an all-time low, he hoped that publishing this book would earn him some money and serve as a propaganda platform to convey his radical views and attack those whom he accused of betraying him and Germany. In *Mein Kampf* Vol. 1, Chapter 11: *People and Race*, Hitler wrote,

> "Everything we admire on this earth today-science, art, technological developments, and inventions-is only the creative product of a few peoples and originally perhaps of one race. The maintenance of this civilization as a whole is entirely dependent on them. Should they perish, all that makes this earth beautiful will descend with them into the grave. On them alone depends the existence of this whole culture. If they perish, the beauty of this earth will sink into the grave with them" (Hitler, 1925).

From the very beginning of the Second World War, Hitler and the Nazis were determined to ensure the strength and purity of the German race.

The Nazis believed that the genetically strong and the racially pure had to be encouraged to have more children, while the genetically weak and the racially impure had to be neutralized by one means or another. These ideas of racial improvement did not

begin during the Second World War, in fact, they had been growing in popularity for over one hundred years prior.

**Origins of Nordicism**

Originating in the early 19th century, anthropologists divided the Caucasian race into sub-races depending on ancestral homelands and fictitious phenotypical traits (Hutton, 2005). Anthropologists created sub-race populations such as Anglo-Saxons, Balts, Celts, Slavs, and the Nordic race. The Nordic race consisted of people from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland, as well as the Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland. The supposed physical traits of the Nordic race included being tall, long-headed, narrow-faced, with a prominent chin; narrow nose with high bridge; soft, smooth, or wavy blonde or reddish-golden hair; deep-sunk, light blue eyes, and rosy-white skin (Gunther, 1927). Very quickly, the belief that the Nordic race constituted the superior branch of the Caucasian race gave rise to the ideology of Nordicism.

**1848: The Revolutions Give Germany An Inferiority Complex**

A little later, during the middle of the 19th century, a wave of anti-monarchism swept through Europe sparking a full-blown revolution starting in the spring of 1848. Paving the way for the revolts, many regions in Europe experienced harvest failures, which led to mass starvation, migration, and civil unrest (Jelks, 2022). The harvest failures mostly affected peasants and the growing urban working classes, only making the caste system and unfair treatment more readily apparent. While the middle classes in German nation-states were committed to liberal principles, the peasants and working classes wanted radical improvements to their working and living conditions.

Due to the unanimous dissatisfaction with the current political leadership, popular unrest occurred and change was fought for on all fronts. Ideas such as liberalism, socialism, and nationalism took root, and workers clamored for more economic rights. Nationalism also played a significant factor in the Revolutions of 1848. Different nation-states pressed for different things, however, Germany's most popular demand was for an elected representative government and the unification of a

nationalist Germany. By August 1848, the Bavarian Army and the Prussian troops completely crushed all German revolutionary uprisings, marking the end of the political insurgence.

At this point, the German nation was feeling defeated and insecure as their foremost aspiration to become a Nationalist state had just faltered, not to mention with the popularized anthropological discussions taking place regarding Nordicism, they felt entirely inferior. The Nazis believed that the Nordic race was superior to all other races, and they were willing to make use of any means to fight for the expansion of this race at the expense of what they perceived to be inferior races.

**1853: Origins of Aryanism**

In the immediate aftermath of the Revolutions of 1848, French aristocrat, diplomat, and writer, Arthur de Gobineau published poems and novels where he first expressed his racial theories. Gobineau was an elitist racist, visibly in his 1853 novel *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*, he argued that there are intellectual differences between human races, that civilizations deteriorate when races are mixed, and that the white race is

superior as they are the only race capable of intelligent thought, creating beauty, and the most beautiful (Gobineau, 1853). Gobineau, along with all of the other German Nationalists, participated in systematic racial scaffolding when discussing race, because, regardless of what race was under observation, they found a way to rank the subgroups within that race, preserving the cohesive structure of racism and antisemitism.

Similar to the way early 19th century anthropologists created subdivision within the Caucasian race and as a result Nordicism was created, Gobineau co-opted the term Aryan for the promotion of scientific racism, spawning the ideology of Aryanism (Blue, 1999). Since the term had been introduced into Western society by Gobineau, it was immediately adopted by various racist and antisemitic writers and anthropologists notably, Theodor Poesche, Houston Chamberlain, and Hans Gunther.

The original connotation of the term Aryan was detached from its proper geographic and linguistic origin as an Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family by this time. What was once an ethnocultural self-designative identity and epithet to

describe a person as noble and virtuous, had suddenly become a universally accepted concept to describe the white race; the only civilized race, and the superior race.

**1859: Charles Darwin's Natural Selection**

During the 1800s, more and more people were looking to science and biology to justify their racial ideas about who was acceptable and who was not. They found support for their arguments in Charles Darwin's 1859, *On the Origin of Species:* a work that seemed unrelated to human societies (Hutton, 2010).

In Darwin's analysis of how various species of plants and animals physically change over time, his work suggested that each species competes for a limited amount of space and nourishment, and consequently only some survive. The individual organism that is well suited to its environment has the best chance of living long enough to mate and produce offspring, and over many generations, the traits that help the organism to survive are passed on, while the traits that create disadvantages die out. As a result, new traits, species, and forms of life gradually develop or evolve. Darwin called this process of evolution natural selection.

**1869: Francis Galton and the Birth Of Eugenics**

Shortly after *On the Origin of Species* was published, many readers immediately saw connections between Darwin's theory of evolution and their own society. Darwin's cousin, an English statistician, explorer, and ethnologist, Francis Galton traveled to Africa and documented his observations in his 1869 book *Hereditary Genius.* He believed that, on average, Black persons are naturally inferior to white persons in intelligence and other hereditary traits fitted to "civilized life" (Galton, 1869). Other non-white races fared little better in his estimation, and some even worse.

Galton asserted that environmental factors cannot account for these racial differences. Black persons in Europe or raised in white families remain much like their "savage" ancestors while white persons visiting or living in Africa maintain their "civilized superiority." These observations convinced him that individuals cannot acquire inheritable attributes through nurture or other environmental factors.

During the following years, Galton wrote *Inquiries into Human Fertility and Its Development,* which is where the term eugenics was first seen. Galton coined the term deriving from the Greek word *eugenes* meaning good in birth or good in stock (Galton, 1869). Eugenics is the use of science to improve the human race, both by breeding "society's best with the best" and by preventing "society's worst" from breeding at all. Eugenicists believed that a nation is a biological community that must be protected from threat, which they often defined as mixing with other allegedly inferior races.

In *Inquiries into Human Fertility and Its Development*, Galton argued that some are born intelligent, and others are born feeble-minded, and the roots of all such hereditary traits reach deep into one's ancestry and deep within one's race (Galton, 1883). He claimed that only higher races could be successful in life. Thus, Galton believed that eugenics could control human evolution and development for the better. Galton developed his hereditarian notions to such a degree that they helped to lay the foundation for both eugenics and racial hygiene, which in their formative period

were allied, overlapping disciplines. The aforementioned Francis Galton and Charles Darwin inspired a British philosopher, Herbert Spencer, to create his own theories.

Referring to Darwin's work but using his own phrases such as "the struggle for existence" and "the survival of the fittest," Spencer helped to popularize a theory known as Social Darwinism. Social Darwinists believed that persons at the top of the social and economic pyramid were considered society's fittest, and contrarily, persons at the bottom must be unfit. Many Social Darwinists, therefore, believed that the government should not interfere in the survival of the fittest by extending rights and privileges to those seen as less fit.

To illustrate, Social Darwinists would vehemently disagree with giving financial aid to struggling single-parent households as that would interfere with the natural function of the biological social and economic pyramid. Another example of a Social Darwinist approach to government would be limiting immigration to protect the racially pure from the impure in the hopes that they do not reproduce, all as a way to help evolution along to purify the

human race. They promoted the idea that some races are biologically superior to others and that if the laws of natural selection were allowed to function freely, everyone would find their rightful place in society.

It must be said that all of these ideologies are pseudoscientific beliefs that appropriate the legitimacy of science to support or justify racism, racial inferiority, and racial superiority.

**1878: The Aryan Race and the Jewish Threat**

In 1878, German American anthropologist Theodor Poesche published a survey of historical references demonstrating that the Aryan phenotype is light-skinned, blue-eyes, and blond hair. Nazi propaganda posters, photographs, and films showed people who fit this ideal (Maldahiyar, 2022). While this was considered the master race, many people whom the Nazis considered to be Aryan Germans did not look like this. Ironically, Adolf Hitler did not even fit this ideal as he had brown hair and was of average height (USHMM).

The Nazis believed that in order to protect the Aryan race and stay strong, they had to stray away from inferior races and remain racially pure. To Hitler and the Nazis, Jewish people were the biggest threat to the Aryan race. Nazis referred to Jews as a parasitic race who were destroying the Aryan race, and needed to be exterminated.

The Nazis even tried to use science to prove these racial theories and recruited doctors and other scientists to help them do so. These officials tried to categorize people into races. They measured and described people's physical features, like noses, skulls, eyes, and hair.

**1899: Chamberlain's Theory: How To Identify A Jew**

In 1899, British German philosopher Houston Stewart Chamberlain published, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century,* in which he theorized an existential struggle to the death between a superior German-Aryan race and the inferior Jewish-Semitic race. He viewed the clash between the two as the basis of the entire European history, and according to Chamberlain, the Germans are fated to destroy the Jews, as they are the "highest

cultural achievers and saviors of humanity," while the Jews are a "bastard race of greedy, inferior foreigners whose interference in the world can only lead to cultural degeneration."

Building somewhat on Gobineau's theories, Chamberlain developed a relatively complex theory relating racial origins, physical features, and cultural traits. According to Chamberlain's 1912 *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, the modern Jew (*Homo judaeica*) mixes some of the features of the Hittite (*H. syriaca*)– notably the "Jewish nose that hooks downward," the retreating chin that juts out, and evil exaggerated eyebrows, an over-cunning fondness for usury – and of the true Semite, the Bedouin Arab (*H. arabicus*), in particular, the dolichocephalic skull (long and narrow), the thick-set body, and a tendency to be intellectually inferior and destructive.

Chamberlain's pseudoscientific, antisemitic theory on how to identify a Jewish person had such a mammoth impact on the next 45 years. This was the groundwork for every school's curriculum during the Second World War. Schools played an essential role in spreading Nazi ideas to German youth. When Nazi

Germany passed new laws to make public education reflect and teach their nationalist and racial ideologies, German educators implemented new lectures, books, and textbooks compiled with instructional manuals filled with absurd caricatures and wild imaginings that taught students how to identify a Jew with exact measurements and what they should do if they come across one.

Hitler greatly admired Chamberlain's ideology, in fact, the two men were close friends who corresponded from the time of Hitler's imprisonment (USHMM). It remains a strong possibility that more so than any other German cultural icon, Chamberlain's form of racial antisemitism was critical in the development of Nazism (Adelé-Marie).

**1920s: Eugenics: The Global Movement**

By the 1920s, eugenics had become a global movement. Amongst other countries, there was well-admired governmental support for eugenics in the United States, Great Britain, Italy, Mexico, and Canada. In Germany, Ernst Haeckel, a biologist, popularized Social Darwinism by combining it with romanticized ideas about the German *Volk*, the people who share German

heritage, language, and culture. Haeckel was also notorious for racial scaffolding, where he divided humankind into races, which he called breeds, ranking each of them into a pyramid (Adelé-Marie, 2004). He described Germans as superior and the highest species of mankind, thus, they were at the top of the ranking, while Jewish and Black people were at the bottom. Haeckel argued that any mixture of the races would lead to the biological deterioration of the German or Aryan race.

Haeckel was taken with the idea of eugenics as a way of keeping the German race pure, as he had been known to say "life was a constant struggle for existence and racial purity," and he sought to forearm Germany against biological decay (Haeckel, 1905). While Ernst Haeckel popularized Social Darwinism, and in doing so introduced eugenics to Germany, the true founder of Germany's eugenics was Alfred Ploetz as he was the primary advocate for racial hygiene. Racial Hygiene is an approach to eugenics, mainly used in the early 20th century, and its most extensive implementation was in Nazi Germany. The main marker between racial hygiene and other forms of eugenics is its toiling

exertions to avoid miscegenation, similar to an animal breeder seeking pedigree or purebred animals.

Throughout history, and regrettably still today, we see the use of eugenics everywhere. Be that as it may, the most well-known application of eugenics in the world occurred in Nazi-invaded Europe for the duration of World War II and the Holocaust. Directly upon Adolf Hitler's election to chancellor of Germany in 1933, he began authorizing programs, crumbling the nation's democratic institutions, and transforming Germany into a war state, insistent on conquering Europe for the benefit of the Aryan race (Stahnisch, 2017). He used Germany's resources at his disposal to cleanse the German people and the Nazi state of those unworthy of life.

***Note to the Reader***

When we learn about the Holocaust and other genocides it is common to feel stressed and perceive it all as a perplexing blend of dates and figures, however, history is much richer than that. History is learning the narratives, the real-life experiences, and the first-hand knowledge which flows through those dates and

historical figures. As a matter of fact, history is the origin story of how things look today. With that being said, I urge you to take your time while reading and set time aside to recuperate, as this historical narrative contains very graphic and disturbing details of abuse, torture, and experimentation on humans. Also, it should be noted that while historians work tirelessly to uncover more and more details about the horrifying medical experimentation in addition to the number of fatalities during the Holocaust, it must be acknowledged how very little statistically we know and how massively incomprehensible this genocide was.

**1939: Operation T4, The Euthanasia Program**

During the Holocaust, the Nazis established killing centres for intentional, methodical, and systematic mass murder. Killing centres were almost exclusively death factories.

Very recently, there has been an evolving terminology concerning the etymology of the camp system. Now we use the term killing center rather than the words death camp or extermination camp or center. The term death camp is a rather vague concept that could be applied broadly to all Nazi camps

where death occurred (USHMM). Likewise, some scholars have objected to using the Nazi-inspired term extermination camp, which conveys the notion that the prisoners were akin to vermin or pests that needed to be eradicated. The term killing center more precisely identifies the function of the facility without any such pejorative connotations about the victims.

Nazi concentration camps, by contrast, served primarily as detention and labor centers. At the killing centres, Nazi officials employed assembly-line methods to murder Jews and other victims. The Killing centres first appeared in Nazi Germany with Operation T4, the Euthanasia Program. The Euthanasia Program began in 1939, only two years before the Nazis began systematically murdering Europe's Jews as part of the Final Solution. The Euthanasia Program originally targeted children with varying disabilities, and later on, extended the program to adults who were living in institutional settings in Germany and German-annexed territories.

Public health authorities began to encourage parents of children with disabilities to admit their young children to one of

several specially designated pediatric clinics throughout Germany and Austria (USHMM). The Euthanasia Program was described to the public as a "mercy death," to relieve the suffering of the chronically ill who lacked quality of life. However, the untold goal was to murder anyone diagnosed with Schizophrenia, Epilepsy, Dementia, Encephalitis, and other chronic psychiatric or neurological disorders, as well as criminals and already-institutionalized patients, and, cleansing the Aryan race of those considered genetically defective and financial burden to society. In reality, the clinics were children's killing wards. There, specially recruited medical staff murdered their young charges by lethal overdoses of medication or by starvation (USHMM).

Once the Nazis saw their plan succeed with children, they began working on exterminating adults with disabilities. When adult patients were selected for the Euthanasia Program, they were picked up from their home institutions and were transported to one of the six gassing installations to be killed. The gas chambers were disguised as shower facilities, and then while the victims were locked within, pure, bottled carbon monoxide gas was released

(USHMM). Following the gassing, T4 functionaries burned the bodies in the crematoria attached to the gassing facilities. Other workers took the ashes of cremated victims from one large common pile and placed them in separate urns to send to the relatives of the victims (Rotzoll, 2006). The families or guardians of the victims received an urn, along with a death certificate and other documentation, listing a fabricated cause and date of death.

Adolf Hitler signed a secret authorization to protect the participating physicians, medical staff, and administrators from prosecution (USHMM). On all levels, this operation was permitted and approved by persons in positions of power, who under all principles were accountable for preventing such acts. The Euthanasia Program was one of many radical eugenic measures which aimed to restore the racial honor and righteousness of the German bloodline. It aimed to eliminate what Nazi eugenicists and their supporters considered “life unworthy of life”: those individuals who-they believed-because of severe psychiatric, neurological, or physical disabilities represented both a genetic and a financial burden on German society (USHMM). Because the

program was secret, T4 planners and functionaries took extremely elaborate measures to conceal its deadly designs. Not to mention that in every case of euthanasia, physicians and institutional administrators falsified official records to indicate that the victims died of natural causes. Thus, historians can only estimate that the Euthanasia Program, in all its phases, claimed the lives of about 250,000 persons, however, there were probably far more fatalities than we have accounted for.

The Euthanasia Program was, in many ways, a rehearsal for Nazi Germany's subsequent genocidal policies of the mass destruction of the Jewish people. The Euthanasia Program was a genocide embedded within a genocide. The Nazi leadership extended the ideological justification conceived by medical perpetrators for the destruction of the disabled to other categories of perceived biological enemies. Planners of the Final Solution later borrowed the gas chamber and accompanying crematoria specifically designed for the T4 campaign, to murder Jews in German-occupied Europe. Despite the program's efforts to stay confidential, the program quickly became an open secret, and

protests concerning the killings began to crop up, forcing Hitler to order a halt to the Euthanasia Program.

Of course, Hitler's call for a halt to the Euthanasia Program was just for show; German medical professionals and healthcare workers resumed the killings, just in a more carefully concealed manner than before. All of the Operation T4 personnel who had proven themselves reliable in the first mass murder euthanasia program were transferred over and featured prominently among the German staff stationed at the centerfold of mass destruction, Operation Reinhard. Codenamed Operation Reinhard, Nazi Germany built three killing centres, or gassing installations which were established as part of this action: Belzec, Sobibor, and Treblinka. Operation Reinhard marked the deadliest phase of Nazi Germany's intention to commit genocide against the Jewish people (USHMM).

**The German Goal of Aryanization and Advancement of Medicine**

The Nazi Party carried out a series of medical experiments within killing centres for two main goals: to mold Germany into a

cohesive national Aryan race and to advance German medicine. While some of the experiments had legitimate purposes, most were racial in nature, thereby violating the principles of medical ethics and participating in the scientifically erroneous and immoral theory of racial hygiene or eugenics. The experiments were accomplished without the consent of the patients and with total disregard for their suffering or their survival.

These medical experiments were performed on a massive scale in Germany and the Nazi-occupied countries on non-German nationalists, both prisoners of war and civilians, including Jewish people and other asocial persons. These experiments were not just the isolated and casual acts of individual doctors and scientists working solely on their own responsibility but were the product of intricately coordinated policy-making and planning at high governmental, military, and Nazi Party levels, conducted as an integral part of the total war effort (USHMM). They were sanctioned, permitted, or approved by persons in positions of power who under all canon were responsible for knowing about and taking steps to terminate or prevent them. Scientists in the

biomedical fields, especially anthropologists, psychiatrists, and geneticists, many of them medically trained experts, played a very important role in legitimizing these policies and helping to implement them.

Long before Hitler took power, these scientists, or eugenicists, had embraced racial hygiene, specifically supporting the ideology that criminality, mental illness, alcoholism, and even poverty, stemmed from hereditary factors, and did not result from environmental factors. Because the Nazi regime was in support of eugenics, these scientists would welcome the Nazi Party with open arms.

During the first half of the twentieth century in Germany, race was arguably the single most important category of social-scientific views of Jews and Jewishness. One of Hitler's favorite authors and theoreticians of race, Hans Friedrich Karl Gunther (1889-1968), was a crusader for Aryan superiority and racial purity (Morris-Reich, 2006). The former literary scholar turned social anthropologist produced a series of infamous studies on Racial Typology (the categorization of humans by race, based solely on

phenotypic traits) which became the outline for Nazi racial anthropology and laid the groundwork for its racial laws and eugenics programs (Ryback, 2008).

**Policies to Legally Remove the Undesirable**

Almost immediately after Hitler was appointed chancellor in 1933, the German government passed a law called *Gesetz zur Verhütung erbkranken Nachwuchses* (Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases), mandating that all persons with undesirable traits be forcibly sterilized. This law provided a basis for the involuntary sterilization of people with physical and mental disabilities, Roma, African-Germans, and other asocials persons.

When Nazi racial hygiene was implemented, the categories of persons and groups regarded as biologically threatening to the nation's health were greatly expanded. The categories went from persons suffering from drug addiction and poverty to ethnic and racial identities such as Jewish persons, Roma, Sinti, and BIPOC communities. This also included persons with physical, mental, or psychological disabilities, and persons in the LGBTQ+ communities.

The Nazis enlisted the help of physicians and medically trained geneticists, psychiatrists, and anthropologists to develop racial health policies. These policies began with mass euthanasia programs and then moved to mass sterilization, and ended with the near destruction of European Jewry (USHMM).

Hitler and the Nazi party were called intentionalists, meaning they intended to murder the Jewish people and the asocials all along (Adelé-Marie). From the very beginning, different kinds of legislation and provisions were put in place, giving the Nazi Party complete and total legitimacy.

To get a full understanding of how intricately calculated the Nazi Party was concerning their nationalist campaign to cleanse Germany of individuals seen as biological threats to the nation's health, it is essential to know one of the men responsible for some of the most despicable crimes against humanity.

**The Doctor Who Experimented On Humans To Prove A Point**

Showing early support for the Nazi ideology, he marched with the Munich unit in 1923 in the failed Hitler putsch (Weisz, 2014). He was a professor and an orthopedic surgeon who was

involved in many sadistic experiments, which took place inside the killing centres. He was the childhood friend and personal physician of Heinrich Himmler, the Commander of the SS, and the main architect and implementor of the Final Solution. Born on November 23, 1897, in Bavaria, within the German Empire, the world introduces one of the worst men of the Third Reich; Karl Gebhardt.

During the war, Gebhardt was responsible for medical experimentation on prisoners at Ravensbrück. In Gebhardt's capacity as an SS consultant surgeon, he treated a high-ranking Nazi official Reinhard Heydrich, after an attempt was made on his life by a Czechoslovakian resistance group (Silver, 2011). Initially, Heydrich's recovery appeared to be going well. Dr. Theodor Morell, Hitler's personal physician, suggested the use of Sulfonamide antibiotics, however, Gebhardt refused the suggestion, assuming Heydrich would recover fully on his own (Weisz, 2014).

Unfortunately for Gebhardt, a few days later, Heydrich died, leaving Hitler and the rest of the Nazi superiors angrily

blaming Gebhardt for Heydrich's death. They claimed Heydrich died of gangrene and Gebhardt was accused of failing to treat him with Sulfonamides. (The autopsy concluded that Heydrich died of sepsis due to bacteria, not gangrene).

In an attempt to exonerate himself, he carried out a series of experiments on Ravensbrück prisoners to defend his belief that Sulfonamides did not change the course or mortality rate of gas gangrene (Silver, 2011). While some of the experiments had legitimate purposes, Gebhardt's desire to experiment with Sulfonamide, was not one of them. His experiments investigated questions that had long been resolved by valid medical research.

**1935: Prontosil, First Commercially Available Antibiotic**

Sulfa drugs were first discovered by a German man named Gerhard Domagk in 1931 after curing mice with Streptococcal infection (Grundmann, 2004). By 1935 a Sulfa antibiotic called Prontosil was regularly sold and recommended.

In 1939, Domagk was selected by the Nobel Foundation to receive the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for the discovery of Prontosil as an antibiotic, the first commercially

available drug effective against bacterial infections. Unfortunately, Nazi Germany banned him from attending the award ceremony and forced him to decline the award (Time, 2014). This was because Carl von Ossietzky, an outspoken anti-Nazi pacifist, had won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1935, which had angered the Nazi German government. Ossietzky was imprisoned and died in a concentration camp (Ryaman). Because of this, in 1937, Adolf Hitler made an official decree that prohibited German nationals to accept the Nobel Prize.

Domagk was arrested and detained by the Gestapo for two weeks where they questioned him incessantly to verify that he was politically loyal to German National Socialism. Because he was a member of the "German Working Front," the "National Socialist People's Welfare Organization," the "National Socialist Association of Germany Technology," and the "National Socialist Medical Association," he was able to verify his support for the Third Reich and he was released.

While Domagk held membership in many National Socialist organizations, he was never a member of the core

National Socialist organizations, such as the “National Socialist German Worker’s Party” (NSDAP), the “Schutzstaffel” (SS), or the “Sturmabteilung” (SA). There is no question that Domagk is one of the most important pathologists of the 20th century and a crucial pioneer of modern medicine. With that being said, a common perception regarding Domagk is that his experience of being arrested and detained, along with being prohibited from accepting the Nobel Prize makes him a victim who suffered under the oppression of the Nazi regime.

After his release, Domagk recorded and documented his experiences as if he had a target on his back and feared for his life. He said the regime kept him under constant surveillance; he avoided any contact with the NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers’ Party), insofar as this may have been for the safety of his family; and he refused offers from the head of the Reich Central Office at the Central Office for Public Health of the NSDAP Reich leadership and the head of the German University Commission in the Department of Deputy of the Fuhrer (Uhlendahl, 2020).

While Domagk was not treated exceptionally, he cannot portray himself as a victim because then he has absolved himself from all responsibility. Unlike Ossietzky, who was actually a victim, who was starved, beaten, and murdered for being an Anti-Nazi Pascifist, Domagk was kept prisoner for a short period, managed to prove his support for Hitler and the Nazi cause enough to be released, and continue his work and life until he died in 1964. But at the same time, Domagk was also not a Nazi perpetrator. He never violated the principles of medical ethics as were written clearly in the *Trials of War Criminals Before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals Under Control Council Law No. 10.: Volume II.* Thus, it is evident that he cannot be categorized as a Nazi perpetrator or as a Nazi victim.

Throughout his life, Domagk continued to experiment with several other sulfonamides, particularly Prontalbin, Debenal, Uliron, and Sulfathiazol, and by 1940, the application of Prontalbin combined with the gas gangrene serum was clinically recommended.

**Gebhardt Torturing to Prove a Point**

Therefore, based on the timeline alone, it was completely unnecessary for Gebhardt to be testing out any new outcomes with the antibiotic several years later. Not to mention, his entire goal to prove Sulfonamides worthless when treating gas gangrene was also fruitless. Thereby, violating the principles of medical ethics #2, "The experiment should such as to yield fruitful results for the good of society, unprocurable by other methods or means of study, and not random and unnecessary in nature" (International Military Tribunal, 1949).

Gebhardt violated all principles of medical ethics seen under the *Permissible Medical Experiments* section of *The Proof as to War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity* in the Medical Case *Trials of War Criminals Before the Nuremberg Military Tribunals Under Control Council Law No. 10.*

These experiments included breaking prisoners' legs, making incisions, and infecting them by rubbing various septic materials including wood chips, dirt, glass, and infected rags into the wounds (Silverm 2011). After Gebhardt created a realistic

battlefield wound, he would then test the usefulness of Sulfanilamide drugs.

He also attempted bone grafting, or transplanting the limbs from camp victims to German soldiers wounded on the Russian front. Once the patient's limb turned to gangrene, they were simply supposed to suffer, even after the leg had turned black and the pain was unbearable. By the time bone grafts were being performed in Ravensbrück, sufficient experimental histologic data, as well as surgical and clinical experience had already accumulated. Even though the procedure had already been proven successful more than a decade earlier, Gebhardt still wanted to experiment, making it clear that the victims of these experiments were being tortured for no plausible scientific purpose (Bollinger, 2008).

While many Germans turned to the Nazi Party to survive or work again, as they had lost their employment due to the Great Depression prior, Gebhardt was not driven into this by any means but intrinsic motivation and pure hatred. When he ran out of human subjects, he *demanded* more (Smithsonian). When that

proved to be a problem, he went over the head of the Killing Center Commandant to get more. Gebhardt was insatiable.

**Gebhardt's Ravensbrück Rabbits**

During the Second World War, 63 young students had been part of the Polish underground resistance intent on defying the brutal Nazi regime. Captured by the Gestapo, they were sent to Ravensbrück, the concentration camp known as "Hitler's Hell for Women." These girls called themselves "the Rabbits" because they were tested on and mutilated by the Third Reich like a scientist would an innocent laboratory animal (Streit, 2018). Another reason was that the experiments made them unable to walk; they could only hop.

The SS physicians at Ravensbrück generally performed experimental operations on women more than once, sometimes even as many as eight times, barely letting the girls heal before they experimented again.

Results of the experiments were presented at the Third Medical Conference of the Consulting Physicians of the German Armed Forces in May 1943, attended by many elite military and

civilian physicians (Streit, 2018). Gebhardt presented very candidly, explaining that the experimental subjects were not volunteers, but concentration camp inmates. It was quite explicit that medical experimentation was being carried out on human beings without their consent. The attendees voiced no criticism.

Gebhardt was guilty of inflicting heinous pain under the guise of research and at the end of the Doctors' Trial, Karl Gebhardt received a death sentence and was hanged on June 2, 1948. Even still, the crimes he committed still haunt the medical community today.

**We Must Learn from Our Past Mistakes**

The history of eugenics is a sobering reminder of how the pursuit of scientific knowledge, when unchecked, can lead to catastrophic consequences. The atrocities committed under the banner of eugenics during the Nazi regime serve as a warning about the dangers of combining pseudoscientific ideas with political ideologies. The racial hygiene policies of the Third Reich, founded upon notions of racial superiority and an insidious desire for a pure Aryan race, led to the systematic murder of millions.

The connection between eugenics and Nazism is a haunting reminder of how prejudice and discrimination can be disguised in the language of science, making it essential for society to remain vigilant against any attempts to revive or legitimize such dangerous ideologies.

As we look back upon this dark era in history, it is crucial to ensure that we learn from our past mistakes and commit ourselves to upholding the principles of equality, human rights, and social justice. Only by acknowledging and learning from this dark past can we hope to build a more just and inclusive future for all of humanity.

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# Echoes of El Paso: Racial Hygiene and the Early Roots of Dehumanization

*Jacqueline Sancen*

This next essay by Jacqueline Sancen connects U.S.-Mexico border disinfection practices and Nazi Germany's racial hygiene policies; the former having definitively influenced the latter.

## Abstract

This essay examines the connection between early twentieth century U.S.-Mexico border disinfection practices and the ideologies that later appeared in Nazi Germany. Focusing on El Paso, Texas, it explores how public health policies were shaped by eugenic beliefs that portrayed Mexican immigrants as dirty, diseased, and inferior. These ideas led to invasive sanitation campaigns, forced disinfection procedures, and the establishment of border processing facilities that subjected thousands of Mexican migrants to humiliating inspections and chemical treatments. The essay also discusses the Bracero Program, which continued many of these practices through large-scale medical examinations, labor camp segregation, and strict systems of control. In addition, it highlights the resistance of Mexican migrants through the story of Carmelita Torres and the 1917 Bath Riots. Finally, the essay

examines the historical link between U.S. border disinfection methods and Nazi Germany's later use of racial hygiene policies, including the adoption of Zyklon B. While experiences of Mexican migrants and Holocaust victims were not equivalent, both systems relied on ideas of racial purity, classification, and dehumanization. Understanding this history demonstrates how science and public health can be misused to justify discrimination and stresses the importance of challenging such ideas before they become normalized.

*Keywords:* Holocaust, U.S.-Mexico border, eugenics, Bracero Program, racial hygiene, Carmelita Torres, Bath Riots, dehumanization

## Echoes of El Paso: Racial Hygiene and the Early Roots of Dehumanization

The Holocaust is widely recognized as one of the most horrific genocides in history, marked by extreme violence and racial ideology. But some of the ideas behind it did not appear out of nowhere. They were influenced by practices already occurring in the United States well before the rise of Adolf Hitler's Nazi

Germany. In the early 20th century, the United States enforced disinfection practices along the U.S.-Mexico border that targeted Mexican immigrants under the guise of public health. These policies were rooted in eugenic beliefs that framed Mexicans as dirty, inferior, and dangerous (Stern, 2005). At places like the El Paso border, migrants were stripped, examined, and forcibly disinfected in ways that deprived them of dignity and cast them as health threats. Similar ideas about contamination and racial hierarchy later appeared in Nazi Germany. This essay explores how these practices reveal early patterns of racial exclusion and social control that echo ideologies later seen in Germany before and during World War II.

**Historical Context**

In the early 1900s, the U.S.-Mexico border became a place of growing tension and control, especially in El Paso, Texas. The violence and instability of the Mexican Revolution pushed many people north toward the United States. At the same time, the U.S. was entering World War I and became increasingly focused on security and protecting its borders, especially from the Germans.

Historian Alexandra Minna Stern (2005) argues that eugenic thinking had become deeply embedded in American society by the early twentieth century, promoting the belief that certain groups were biologically superior to others. These beliefs shaped immigration policies and public attitudes, especially toward Mexican migrants, who were often labeled as dirty, diseased, and inferior.

According to Stern (2005), public health quickly became a tool to enforce these ideas. U.S. officials at the border treated Mexicans as a biological threat, subjecting them to inspections, quarantines, and routine disinfection that were not applied equally to white or European migrants (Stern, 2005). They were even described by officials as an “alien race” with different morals and diseases, reinforcing the idea that they needed to be controlled and monitored (Stern, 2005). These early policies show how science and medicine were used to give legitimacy to racist ideas and unequal treatment. Rather than protecting public health, these policies labeled some groups as inferior and dangerous. Those

same beliefs about race and belonging would later appear in more extreme forms under Nazi rule.

**Mayor Tom Lea and Sanitation Campaign**

As tensions at the border continued to rise, local officials began putting these ideas into action. According to historian David Romo (2005), El Paso Mayor Tom Lea emerged as one of the most vocal advocates of aggressive sanitation policies, which he argued were necessary to protect the city from disease. He argued that Mexican immigrants were transmitting typhus through lice infestations, using this fear to rationalize radical measures in the name of public health (Romo, 2005). Yet documented cases of typhus were very low, raising questions about whether these policies were driven more by racism and panic than by medical necessity.

Under Lea, Mexican neighborhoods were targeted for destruction in what he termed “sanitary betterment work.” Homes were burned, families were displaced, and entire communities were treated as sources of contamination (Romo, 2005). Those suspected of being afflicted with lice were forced to bathe in

kerosene and vinegar, have their heads shaved, and have all their possessions burned. These practices publicly humiliated people and reinforced the idea that they were dirty and disposable.

This logic extended into the El Paso jail, where similar disinfection practices using kerosene and vinegar led to a fire that killed 27 Mexican and Mexican American inmates. Newspapers at the time referred to this tragedy as the "Jail Holocaust," years before the term became associated with Nazi Germany (Romo, 2005). These events show how ideas of forced cleanliness and racial control were already being normalized in the United States and helped establish a pattern that would later appear in more drastic forms elsewhere.

**Border Disinfection Plants & The Bracero Program: Tools of Dehumanization**

At the U.S.-Mexico border, Stern (2005) describes the border disinfection plants as part of a broader system that institutionalized public health inspections and disinfection procedures for Mexican immigrants seeking entry into the United States. People were required to strip naked while their clothes were

taken to be steamed and fumigated. Their bodies were inspected for lice, including their private areas. The same kerosene and vinegar treatments used under earlier sanitation campaigns were now built into the official border inspection process. In some cases, their hair was shaved, and they were subjected to additional screenings for disease or "fitness" (Stern, 2005). These procedures reduced people to potential sources of disease rather than recognizing them as individuals.

Regrettably, this process was not a one-time event. Migrants who crossed regularly for work had to go through these procedures every time they crossed, sometimes every eight days, making humiliation a routine part of daily life for Mexican migrants. The scale of this system was massive. Over 127,000 Mexicans were subjected to these procedures in 1917 alone, with hundreds of thousands more processed in the years that followed (Stern, 2005). What was framed as a public health measure instead became a system that singled people out on the basis of race and disease. The message was clear: Mexican migrants were not welcomed as future

Americans but were instead treated as a group requiring constant scrutiny and regulation.

These practices continued and expanded during the Bracero Program (1943-1964), a labor agreement between the United States and Mexico that brought Mexican men into the U.S. to fill labor shortages in agriculture and railroads during and after World War II (Kosack, 2021). The program was presented as an economic opportunity, but it also created a system in which workers were processed and inspected like cattle on a massive scale. Braceros were stripped, sprayed with chemicals like DDT, and subjected to medical examinations before being allowed to work (Mize, 2016). Even those who were healthy were treated as if they were contaminated simply because of their ethnicity and skin color.

Drawing on oral histories from former workers, Mize and Swords (2010) document how invasive these procedures were for many Braceros. Men remember being stripped bare, fumigated, and physically examined in uncomfortable and degrading ways, including testing for infections and other conditions that might

disqualify them from entering (Mize & Swords, 2010). Masses of people were processed, inspected, categorized, and cleared or rejected on the basis of perceived biological worth. These systems demonstrate early forms of racialized classification and medicalized surveillance, mirroring methods later used by Nazi Germany, where bodies were stripped, inspected, and categorized according to state-defined standards.

These conditions did not stop at the border. Many Bracero workers were sent to isolated labor camps upon arrival in the United States, where they were under strict supervision. They were often housed in overcrowded barracks or temporary buildings, segregated from the rest of society and treated as disposable labor, rather than individuals (Mize & Swords, 2010). In addition, their daily lives were dictated by long work hours, transportation, and the availability of basic necessities such as food and housing. Bracero workers who did complain were often ignored and risked punishment, loss of wages or deportation if they spoke up (Mize, 2016). The mistreatment continued throughout the Braceros' labor

experience, where many remained under strict supervision and faced ongoing discrimination.

**Carmelita Torres and the Bath Riots**

Not everyone accepted these conditions quietly. In 1917, a 17-year-old Mexican maid named Carmelita Torres refused to go through the disinfection process at the Santa Fe Bridge in El Paso, Texas. Instead of complying, she stayed on the trolley and encouraged other women to do the same. What started as a simple act of resistance quickly grew into a much larger protest (Romo, 2005). Many women were already angry and humiliated by the treatment they faced at the border. In addition to the disinfection process, there were reports that officials photographed women while they were naked and displayed these images publicly. As more people joined, the protest grew from a few individuals into a crowd of over 2,000 people. Demonstrators blocked traffic, threw rocks and bottles, and forced the temporary closure of the border (Romo, 2005). The response from the U.S. authorities was immediate and violent. The protest was shut down, several participants were arrested, and some were reportedly publicly

executed to be made examples of. Carmelita Torres herself was jailed, and little is known about what happened to her afterward (Romo, 2005). Despite the scale of the protest, the disinfection practices did not stop and continued for decades.

The Bath Riots show that Mexican migrants were not passive victims. They resisted where they could, despite the risk of violence and punishment. Carmelita Torres' actions were a powerful moment of defiance against a system that sought to regulate nearly every aspect of migrants' lives. Her story is often left out of mainstream history, but it is an important reminder that even within oppressive systems, people still found ways to fight back.

**The Link to the Holocaust**

While the events at the U.S.-Mexico border and the Holocaust were not the same, there are clear connections in the ideas and methods used. One of the most direct links appears in the use of chemical disinfection. In the early 20$^{th}$ century, U.S. officials used toxic chemicals, including Zyklon B, to fumigate clothing at border facilities as part of their sanitation process.

According to Stern (2005), these methods were presented as scientific and necessary, but they were rooted in the belief that certain groups were inherently unclean and dangerous. German scientists had begun examining American border disinfection practices by the late 1930s. A German pest control journal even referenced the U.S. border disinfection methods and included images of facilities in El Paso as examples of effective chemical treatment. The same chemical, Zyklon B, would later be used in Nazi concentration and death camps, not for sanitation, but for mass murder (Stern, 2005). However, the connection goes beyond the use of Zyklon B.

Both systems were built on the belief that certain groups posed a problem that needed to be managed. At the U.S.-Mexico border, Mexican migrants were subjected to inspections, fumigations, and other invasive procedures. Nazi Germany embraced similar ideas about race and purity, leading to far more extreme policies that culminated in mass extermination. This history demonstrates how easily science and public health can be made tools of discrimination when driven by racism. The

similarities between these systems remind us that dangerous ideas about race and human value were not confined to one country alone.

**Conclusion**

The history of disinfection practices at the U.S.-Mexico border reveals how racism, eugenics, and public health were combined to justify unequal treatment and exclusion. What was presented as protection against disease became a system that labeled Mexican migrants as threats and justified invasive and degrading treatment. From forced baths and inspections to large-scale processing and surveillance, these policies were not isolated incidents but part of a broader way of thinking that assigned value to people based on race and perceived cleanliness. The events at the U.S.-Mexico border demonstrate that many of the ideas later embraced by Nazi Germany were already influencing American policy decades earlier. While the scale and outcomes were very different, both systems relied on similar beliefs about purity, control, and the need to manage certain populations. The use of science and medicine to justify these actions shows how easily

these tools can be turned into weapons of destruction guided by prejudice.

Remembering these events is important because it shows how easily fear and prejudice can become accepted as normal. Those same patterns can still be found today if we are not willing to question them. The story of the U.S.-Mexico border, and of people like Carmelita Torres who resisted it, reminds us that systems of injustice are built over time and that recognizing them is the first step in preventing them from happening again.

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## The Roma

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

The Roma, also known as the Romani people, are an ethnic group whose origins can be traced to northern India, with communities established throughout Europe for centuries (Hancock, 2002). Despite their long presence on the continent, they were frequently marginalized and subjected to discrimination long before the rise of National Socialism. Under the Nazi regime, this exclusion was transformed into a racialized state policy that classified Roma alongside Jews and other groups as “undesirable” and outside the boundaries of the so-called Aryan racial community. Nazi racial ideology did not treat these categories as social or cultural differences, but as biological threats to be removed from the German and European population (Hancock, 2002).

Persecution of the Roma intensified in the 1930s and escalated significantly during the Second World War. Early measures included forced registration, restrictions on movement, and social exclusion. By the early 1940s, these policies developed

into systematic deportations and mass imprisonment. Roma families were sent to ghettos and concentration camps across Nazi-occupied Europe, where they were subjected to forced labor, starvation, disease, and violence. At Auschwitz-Birkenau, an entire section was designated for Romani prisoners, where thousands died under conditions that were deliberately lethal (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d.).

This persecution culminated in genocide during the Holocaust, often referred to as the *Porajmos*, meaning "the Devouring." Estimates of Romani victims vary, but hundreds of thousands were murdered across Nazi-controlled territories (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d.). As Ian Hancock has argued, Nazi policy toward the Roma evolved from exclusion to systematic extermination, reflecting the regime's radical racial ideology at its most extreme stage (Hancock, 2002).

However, the history of the Roma during the Holocaust has also been shaped by uneven patterns of remembrance. As Ari Joskowicz has demonstrated, Romani experiences were often marginalized in both early Holocaust historiography and postwar

public memory, even as their persecution occurred alongside that of Jewish victims. While Jewish suffering became central to global understandings of the Holocaust, Romani victims frequently struggled for recognition and inclusion in historical narratives. This disparity highlights not only differences in survival and documentation, but also the broader politics of memory that have shaped how the Holocaust and genocide has been studied and understood (Joskowicz, 2023).

Scholars often distinguish between the Holocaust, defined as the Nazi genocide of the Jews, and the broader system of Nazi mass persecution and murder, which also included the genocide of the Roma and other targeted groups (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, n.d.). The genocide of the Roma is therefore not only a matter of Nazi racial policy, but also part of the wider history of how the Holocaust has been interpreted, remembered, and integrated into historical scholarship. It underscores the importance of understanding the Holocaust not only as a singular event of mass murder, but also as a series of interconnected experiences whose memory has been unevenly preserved.

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Note: "Gypsy" is considered a pejorative exonym and the words Roma or Romani are used instead.

“Monsters exist, but they are too few in number to be truly dangerous. More dangerous are the common men, the functionaries ready to believe and to act without asking questions.”

Quote attributed to Primo Levi, chemist, scientist, author, activist, survivor (1919–1987)

**Unit Five: Children and the Holocaust**

## Children and the Holocaust: An Introduction

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

From 1933-1945, the Nazis murdered 1.5 million Jewish children under the age of sixteen. The Nazis were relentless in their torture and murder of Jewish children. Using women, National Socialism wanted to eliminate, "within a hundred years, the dark German type by mating them with blonde women" in order to create a super race of 'racially' pure, blonde-haired, blue-eyed people (Toland, 1976, p. 764). Therefore, Jewish children were targeted for death.

For pure Germanic blood to survive, the Nazi regime established a hundred-year plan, conceived in part by Heinrich Himmler, Hitler's *Reichsführer*, *SS*. Himmler established "*Lebensborn* [Spring of Life], an SS maternity organization whose main function was to adopt racially suitable children for childless SS families and to assist racially sound unwed mothers and their children" (Toland, 1976, p. 764). Children who matched racial Aryan tenets, with the hopes of creating the blonde, blue-eyed

super race, were stolen and given to SS families to raise (Malone, 2010, para. 2). The Nazis kidnapped 12,000 children who were given to SS families to raise; these innocent children were forced to become part of a racial experiment to create a superior Aryan race (Malone, 2010, para. 2).

*Lebensborn* was also described as "stud farms where SS men and suitable young women were mated to breed a master race." (Toland, 1976, p. 764). A government that encouraged fertility in such a way, and used women to achieve racial goals certainly did not view women in an egalitarian fashion, nor were full civil and political rights for them promoted. Propaganda, literature, and film helped support these genocidal constructs. The world needed to do more to help children. The *Kindertransport* was one such mission to save Jewish children from certain death.

Precious few children survived, as Rabbi Michael Davis discusses in the incredible story of how his mother escaped certain death. Maria Anna Mariani writes about perhaps one of the most well-known writers, and, unfortunately, victims of the Nazis, Anne Frank. Mariani carefully considers Holocaust memory in her essay.

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Here, we have an important essay by Rabbi Michael Davis, writing on the *Kindertransport*, and how this mission saved thousands of Jewish children from certain death.

**Holocaust Memory: The *Kindertransport***

*Rabbi Michael Davis*

The *Kindertransport* is the story of the dramatic rescue of Jewish children from Nazi Europe on the eve of the Second World War, racing against the clock and with a fantastic outcome. As a result of the *Kindertransport* 10,000 Jewish children survived the Holocaust. Without the *Kindertransport*, these children would almost certainly have perished along with the 1,500,000 other minors murdered in the Nazi killing centres. In the last twenty years, awards bestowed on participants and books have been published by survivors. A film version starring Judi Dench won an Oscar.

What was the *Kindertransport*?

At the end of 1938, the Jewish citizens of Nazi lands faced unprecedented harassment and outright violence from their fellow countrymen. Nazi authorities unleashed their uniformed militias on

their fellow Jewish citizens. Faced with this betrayal by their countrymen, German-speaking Jews sought ways out.

But the world was preparing for a world war that was looming; refugees were not welcome. A public campaign was launched in England and the British Parliament admitted thousands of unaccompanied Jewish children to the United Kingdom - so long as there were British foster families ready to assume responsibility for them. As desperate parents sent their children to the homes of strangers in a foreign land, they told their children - and themselves: this separation is only temporary, only until all this blows over.

However, as we know, with few exceptions, these parents did not survive the Holocaust. But their children, safe in England, did. Eighty years later, hundreds of thousands of their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren are alive today thanks to the Kindertransport.

I am one of that next generation. My mother had just turned 7 years old, when in late December 1938, she and her two older sisters kissed their mother Rosa goodbye at the Vienna train

station. It was the last time they would see her. Under the hostile gaze of Nazi police, the sisters boarded the train headed north to Holland and on to ferries to cross the English Channel.

My maternal grandfather, had already escaped Nazi Austria to Belgium. In early November 1938, a red sports car with a Nazi officer and driver drew up to the family's business, a delicatessen. A truckload of Nazi police followed. They had come to take away the Jewish men. My mother watched from high up in the family's apartment across the street. As the Nazis entered the shop through the front door, David slipped out of the delicatessen's back door. Rosa told the men that her husband was away on business. They threatened to seize her daughter who was working with her as a hostage. Meanwhile, David hid in the apartment building's laundry room up in the attic.

Several days later on the night of November 9, the Nazis torched synagogues across Germany and Austria. This was *Kristallnacht* [the November Pogrom, or Night of Broken Glass]. The nearby synagogue went up in flames and the sparks threatened to ignite the apartment building's roof. That was when David

decided it was no longer safe to hide there. He fled Vienna to join his brother in Antwerp, Belgium.

At the end of December 1938, after she sent off the girls to England, Rosa too got out of Austria, travelling through Germany to join her husband in Antwerp. She was accompanied by her youngest child, Michael (whom I am named after). At five years old, he was too young to be sent away to England with his sisters.

The Nazis famously kept meticulous records of their crimes. There's a record of a transport in 1942 from Antwerp to Auschwitz. Rosa is listed there as are her son Michael and an infant daughter, Charlotte, born to David and Rosa after the Nazis occupied Belgium. There is another entry in the Nazis' log recording that transport's arrival in Auschwitz two days later. But in this entry, Rosa is missing. She had died in one of the cattle cars. On arrival in Auschwitz, 7-year-old Michael and 18-month-old Charlotte were immediately taken to the killing center at Birkenau to be murdered.

Meanwhile in England, the three sisters were assigned to Jewish foster homes. Following their arrival and for the next 18

months, Rosa continued to write to her three daughters from Antwerp. This ended in May 1940 when the German army reached Belgium and cut off shipping routes and postal delivery to England.

The girls stayed in touch by corresponding with each other with handwritten letters. The handwritten letters my mother wrote to her older sister throughout the war years tell their own story. Within the space of a few months of arriving in England, the angular Gothic handwriting she had learned in school in Vienna morphs into the rounded letters of an English schoolgirl. Her German gives way to English. Within a few letters, the only German she still had was the farewell: *viele grusse* [many greetings]. It was heartbreaking to read one of my mother's letters to her older sister, Ilse: "Mami wrote me in German but I don't understand it anymore."

Even as the *Kindertransport* children and their foster families waited for the war to end and the promised reunion with their biological parents, the children became assimilated into English ways. Like immigrants the world over, the Jewish refugees

were expected to be grateful and to just fit in. My mother felt the shame of being "a refugee girl."

My mother did forget, at least outwardly. She became British, she married and had her own family. She never spoke about her childhood experiences to me or my siblings. She wasn't in touch with her fellow refugees.

This changed suddenly in 1988. London-based Bertha Leverton was the first to break the silence when she issued a call for the first reunion of the *Kindertransport* survivors. For Bertha, the turning point was seeing her 14-year-old granddaughter. It dawned on her that that was exactly how old she had been when she said goodbye to her parents in Munich, Germany.

At that first *Kindertransport* reunion in London in 1989, my mother reconnected with people she hadn't seen in fifty years. The *Kindertransport* continued to gather annually. Friendships were rekindled. My mother became involved in the *Kindertransport* organization.

The "*Kinde*r" as they affectionately called each other no longer carried the shame of being refugees living off the kindness

of strangers. They were mature, accomplished adults, truly grateful to their adopted homeland, proud of having made it.

When the *Kinder* started to tell their story in public it was half a century and more after the Holocaust. The generation of adult Holocaust survivors - those who had been imprisoned in the concentration camps or survived the war in Europe in other ways - was dying out. In my work as a rabbi, we were finding it increasingly hard to find Holocaust survivors who could speak about their story. So, the *Kindertransport* and the "hidden children" inherited the role of Holocaust storyteller, teaching children and adults about what had happened.

Now, as my mother ages, the task of telling the story has devolved to the next generation, including me. I have told the story at the Illinois Holocaust Museum and in various synagogues. When I tell my Mother's story, I marvel at the logistical nightmare of organizing and transporting this precious cargo across hostile borders; the herculean task of mobilizing public figures in England to get Parliament to accept the children; and all the Jewish and other families who took in a refugee child when their own future

was so precarious.

One detail that stood out for me was the particular selflessness of the adult chaperones, those German Jews who accompanied the transports of children from Nazi territory to safe harbor in England. These Jewish adults were sworn to return home after delivering their charges. The temptation to remain in England must have been great indeed. But the penalty for violating the agreement with the British government could have jeopardized the entire *Kindertransport* project: it was children only. So, the chaperones did go back to continental Europe to take their chances in what would, in a few short years, would become the Holocaust.

I also wonder at what motivated people to devote themselves to the *Kindertransport*. Some were established activists, others were Jewish communal leaders like Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld, the son-on-law of the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. But some did not get involved in any similar activity either before or after the *Kindertransport* like the young businessman Nicolas Winton, who was later knighted by the Queen for his leadership of the *Kindertransport*.

Finally, there are the untold stories of the *Kindertransport*. Yes, it was a phenomenal success story. And yet: most of these children never saw their parents and other family again. The lucky few parents who somehow survived the Nazi concentration camps and war met a much older child or even young adult, one who had changed beyond recognition during the seven years of separation growing with another family in a foreign language and culture. The child whose dream it was to fit in and shed the stigma of "Jewish refugee" now had "Holocaust survivor" parents who spoke English with a heavy accent staring out again in this new post-war world.

Meanwhile, the *Kinder* had endured the Blitz and other deprivations of war. Everything was rationed in wartime Britain. My mother remembers going to bed hungry. The children's wellbeing was entirely in the hands of the foster parents. There were no social workers to monitor the families. The children had no flesh and blood relatives to look out for them. Some children truly became equal members of their foster family, others were not so fortunate.

I wouldn't be alive today without the kindness, grit,

bravery and effectiveness of the people of the *Kindertransport*, the selfless courage and foresight of grandparents I never met, the generosity of the British government and the Jewish foster families that took my mother in and my mother's resilience under great hardship. Also, I wonder what the impact of all these events had on my mother and our family.

As I write this in 2021, the *Kinder* are a dwindling group. The youngest of them is approaching 90 years old. But the community of memory they established by telling their story continues to expand in widening circles. The experience of being a child refugee separated from one's parents is sadly a universal one, as we know all too well here in the U.S. As a parent myself, I am reminded of how precious and fragile a child is. This is not an easy story to tell but it is an important one to know. Amidst the incomprehensible, dehumanizing bestiality of the Holocaust, the *Kindertransport* is a beacon of sanity, kindness and courage. It is one example of the triumph of humanity against all odds.

Further reading/viewing:

In the past twenty years since the *Kindertransport* story

became known, a plethora of materials have been published. A good place to start is one of the first such works, the documentary *Into the Arms of Strangers* (2000) Warner Bros starring Judi Dench. The documentary is based on the book by the same name that is worth reading in its own right. The book, *Into the Arms of Strangers* is by Mark Jonathan Harris and Deborah Oppenheimer. Also, *The Children of Willesden Lane* (2003) Grand Central Publishing by Mona Gollabek and Lee Cohen. A recent, scholarly book that goes into the complicated consequences of the Kindertransport that I alluded to is *The Kindertransport - Contesting Memory* by Jennifer Craig-Norton, published by Indiana University Press in 2019.

End of essay.

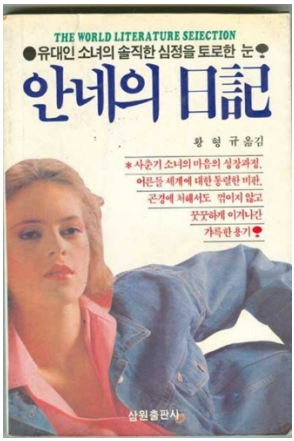
In our next essay related to children and the Holocaust, often the first person that comes to mind is Anne Frank. Here University of Chicago professor Maria Anna Mariani offers a unique literary analysis on the "afterlives" and interpretations of Anne. Editor's note: due to the length of citations, the original format was left as the author constructed them. Changes were not made as to not lose context. The author's opinions expressed are her own, and to some readers, may present a controversial analysis of Anne Frank.

## On the Posthumous Life of Anne Frank

*Maria Anna Mariani*

The article reflects on the literary afterlives of Anne Frank, on the global circulation of the diary, and on the thorny issue of its copyright. Re-examining the complex editorial history in light of new theoretical concerns regarding universalism and world literature, I ask, not only what is an author, but what is an editor and-perhaps most crucially-what responsibilities does this latter have toward the witness.

I want to begin this essay about the history of a text by contemplating an image (this book is no longer in print):




A girl - almost a Barbie doll - with a dreamy look, her lips tracing out the profile of a heart, her teenage bust swaddled in a jean jacket. To find out who she is, we have to decipher those signs - the syllables above the girl's elbow and across her shirt. They read: "A Jewish girl speaking her mind. *Anne's Diary.* Growth of the hearth of an adolescent girl, sharp criticism of the adult's world, admirable courage to "firmly" overcome difficulties without allowing them to break her." [1]

[1] Hwang Hyong-Kyu is the translator of this particular edition of the *Diary of Anne Frank*, published by Samwon, which no longer exists. This book cover does not represent the standard way in which *The Diary of Anne Frank* circulates in Korea, and it has been intensely criticized by Koreans themselves (especially in private blogs). Nonetheless, the book cover interests me as a symptom, because it

*Anne's Diary*. Just Anne, without Frank. Stripped to the bare absolute of a first name, this is one of the ways in which the most famous diary in history circulated in South Korea. But what is startling about this illustration is not the absence of a family name. It is the blonde hair, the absent-minded expression, the lipstick and the jean jacket that provoke incredulity, indignation, or some other emotion as well. But instead of allowing these emotions to coagulate into instantaneous forms of judgment, I would like to try now to understand. I would like to try to understand what made the conception of this idea and then its unimpeded circulation possible. I would like to reflect on Anne Frank using this unexpected reproduction of her as my point of departure.

Let us take another look at it. The most striking aspect is the complete removal of identifying features, or even human traits: what we see is a neutral face, with no marks of individuality, no

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represents the apex of a process of depersonalization of Anne's story and image- as I will argue in my article. I would like to thank Kyeong-Hee Choi, Professor of Modern Korean Literature at the University of Chicago, for finding out precious bibliographical information about this edition of the *Diary*.

deviations from the norm. It is a depersonalized, almost plastic face. It could be a diagram or the idea of a face. The lack of a family name only accentuates this abstraction of personal traits: Anne has no ancestry, no roots. She is *a* girl - and in this case the indefinite article signals what she has most in common with all other girls.

How did this complete erasure of individual data, this transformation of Anne Frank into a generic young girl, become possible? The book cover is not an isolated case: rather, it is the apex in a process of candy-coated rarefication of the image and words of Anne Frank. In Japan, for example, the diary is read primarily as an emblematic representation of adolescence, to the point that "Anne Frank" is the code name that young girls whisper to each other when they get their first period.[2] But even when the diary is read without isolating its adolescent aspect, and hence, more fully and completely as a testimony of the Shoah, there is

[2] On the Japanese reception of the *Diary*, see "Why are the Japanese so Fascinated with Anne Frank?" in *Haaretz*, January 22, 2014, http://www.haaretz.com/jewish/news/1.569938, and "Japanese Retain Fascination with Anne Frank" in *Deutsche Welle*, March 2, 2015, http://www.dw.com/en/japanese-retain-fascination-with-anne-frank/a-18284457.

still something in its pages that irresistibly invites the reader to identification. What is it? Why is it so easy to submerge ourselves in Anne Frank?

A lot of people have wondered about this temptation. Philip Roth is one of them. In *The Ghost Writer* he portrays an Anne Frank who somehow managed to survive the concentration camps. This particular Anne is the projection of Zuckerman's fantasies-the narrator-character whose first appearance as Roth's alter-ego was in 1979 in *The Ghost Writer*. Zuckerman imagines that a mysterious girl-a femme fatale, he calls her-encountered at the house of an established writer is the Anne Frank of the diary. While he scrutinizes the angles of a female face now almost in its twenties, Zuckerman fantasizes a fate for the character that extends well beyond the diary's ending. After having witnessed the deaths of her mother and sister at Bergen-Belsen, Anne decides that it would be better "to put an ocean the size of the Atlantic between herself and what she needed to forget."[3] She chooses America as

[3] Philip Roth, *The Ghost Writer* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1979), 126. For a critical reading of this novel, see Francine Prose, *Anne Frank: The Book, The Life, The Afterlife* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009); Aimee Pozorski,

her new homeland-and there she lives a segment of her life without history and without memory, until one day, in a dentist's waiting room, she comes across an article in *Time* magazine about her father: Otto Frank, the only surviving member of the family. Reading the article, she learns that she is the author of a famous diary, which she desperately tries to get a copy of: the book is apparently unfindable.

When she finally manages to get her hands on one, it seems to her as if its weight, lying in the folds of her American girl's skirt, "was her survival itself. *Van Anne Frank*. Her book. Hers."[4] Mesmerized by Zuckerman's imaginings, we watch her seated on a bench, engrossed in the rereading of her own diary-her inked survival-and becoming the privileged interpreter of herself. Reflecting on the diary, Anne realizes that the description of her Jewishness that she has produced is quite colorless. Like in this

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"How to Tell a True Ghost Story: *The Ghost Writer* and the case of Anne Frank," in *Philip Roth: New Perspectives on an American Author*, ed. David Parker Royal, with a foreword by Daniel Walden (Westport: Praeger Publisher, 2005), 89-103; Sara R. Horovitz, "Literary Afterlives of Anne Frank," in *Anne Frank Unbound: Media, Imagination, Memory*, ed. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Jeffrey Shandler (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012), 215-254.

[4] Roth, *The Ghost Writer*, 134.

section from the diary: “my first wish after the war is to become a Dutch citizen. I love the Dutch, I love this country, I love the language, and I want to work here.”[5] The author depicted by Roth who reads her own work understands that it was precisely this absence of Jewish traditions, this insistence on assimilation, that fueled the extraordinary success of the book and its ability to become an emotional mirror for anyone who dives between its lines.

Nestled inside Roth’s novel we thus find a preliminary hypothesis regarding the remarkable universalization of Anne, one that reveals an unexpected opposition : in this instance, universal is the antithesis of Jewish. But the reason the Franks came to symbolize “the people next door”[6] in the collective imagination is

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[5] Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl: The Definitive Edition*, ed. Otto H. Frank and Mirjam Pressler, trans. Susan Masotty (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 263.

[6] See Meyer Levin’s review of the *Diary*, published in *The New York Times* on June 15, 1952. After the War, Meyer wrote a play based on the *Diary*, but it was not produced (according to Levin, who recounts his frustrated reaction to this refusal in his autobiography *The Obsession*, the decision was based on his “excessively Jewish” approach to the *Diary*). See Meyer Levin, *The Obsession* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974). On Levin’s “obsession” with Anne Frank, see Lawrence Graver, *An obsession with Anne Frank: Meyer Levin and The Diary* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), and Francine Prose, “The Play,” in *Anne Frank: The Book, The Life, The Afterlife*, 177-223.

not only because of how they are represented as a perfectly assimilated family. There is another factor at work that encourages untrammeled identification: the patina of hopeful optimism that envelops the diary. "I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart,"[7] reads the most famous sentence written by Anne Frank, played up and canonized by the prestige of a motto. This is the sentence charged with encapsulating the diary's message and appearing on the back jacket of every edition, proliferating into the more than sixty languages of the countries where it has been translated, including Italy, of course, where the preface to the first edition comes from the pen of Natalia Ginzburg.

Commenting on "the innocent voice that was silenced," she writes that "we stash away in our memory the trusting, untroubled vibration, the courageous goodness of this voice that has overcome death."[8] Before storing away hope, though, when we approach the diary, explains Ginzburg, we must keep in mind "it's tragic conclusion; without being able to linger on the specific moments

[7] Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl: The Definitive Edition*, 328.
[8] Natalia Ginzburg, preface to the first Italian edition of *Il diario di Anna Frank,* trans. Arrigo Vita (Torino: Einaudi 1959), xi.

that it describes, looking continuously beyond it."[9] While this may seem obvious, in reality it is an essential distinction. Because there are many who downplay the documentary value of the diary: it should not be read as a paradigmatic text about the Shoah because it represents a non-standard testimony. It is nothing but the chronicle of a crystallized fear that, in actuality, leaves out the true event: the deportation.[10] But the lacuna in the story is precisely what gives authenticity to this testimony, making it all the more precious and troubling, because that void at the end is the trace of Anne's failure to survive. Her words cannot be discredited because of their incompleteness, but rather valued all the more because of their eloquent partiality. The diary is a story of the truth, even though we know it is not the whole truth.

But let us go back to the optimism that crystallized into the emotional symbol of the diary. "I still believe, in spite of everything, that people are truly good at heart." I am repeating this

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[9] Ginzburg, preface to the first Italian edition of *Il diario di Anna Frank*, ix-x.
[10] See at least Lawrence L. Langer, "The Uses-and Misuses-of a Young Girl's Diary: 'If Anne Frank Could Return from among the Murdered, She Would Be Appaled,'" in *Anne Frank: Reflections on Her Life and Legacy,* ed. Hyman A. Enzer and Sandra Solotaroff-Enzer (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 203-206.

sentence, which extols human tolerance and goodness no matter what, because it was the polemical target of a scathing article by Cynthia Ozik.[11] Asking why it was specifically those words, and not others, that were destined to frame the text's reception, Ozik criticizes the theater version based on the diary, which domesticates the story of the events for the stage, putting redemption and forgiveness at the forefront. In Ozik's view, the optimism of the theatrical version is so extreme that it inspired a comment by Natalie Portman, who made her Broadway debut in 1997 in the role of Anne Frank: "she's fun, she's hopeful, and she's a happy person," the actress is reported to have said in an interview given at the end of the show.

For Ozik, the candy-coated rarefication of Anne Frank was not set into motion purely by the playwrights of the Broadway show, guided by the idea of smoothing down Anne's individual features to the point of making her a disembodied being. For Ozik, the person responsible first and foremost for this process was Otto

[11] Cynthia Ozick, "Who Owns Anne Frank?" in *Quarrel and Quandary* (New York: Vintage, 2000), 74-102.

Frank, her father, the one who survived: the only one to survive. Before submitting his daughter's manuscript to the publisher, Otto Frank apparently made a substantial number of cuts to purge the text of its most disturbing elements: the discovery of sexuality, her inflammatory comments about her mother, and the darker tones of Anne's reflections. Part of his strategy was to emphasize the element of assimilation in the hope that the diary would gain a wider audience.

What was Otto's role in the text's reception? Did he really censor the diary for profit motives or, as has been suggested at times, even prompted by an internalized antisemitism? Establishing the father's role in the composition of the diary became a question of legal urgency in 2016, because it determines when the copyright on the text expires. The Anne Frank Funds Foundation[12] has recently announced that Otto Frank is the true coauthor of his daughter's manuscript, a decision that has stunned everyone, and that considerably extends the copyright on the diary

[12] Founded in Basel in 1963, the AFF has acted as Otto Frank's universal heir since his death in 1980; its purpose is to promote his daughter's writings and protect them from illegal uses.

past its original date. The period will henceforth no longer be calculated starting from Anne's death, but rather from 1980, the year of Otto's death.[13] There is no lack of controversy surrounding this decision: it would appear that it is nothing but a strategy on the part of the Anne Frank foundation to police the manuscript's content and ensure that they continue to receive the royalties that it generates.

From censor to coauthor: that is quite a difference. Otto's new status as coauthor is astonishing; it is so astonishing that it calls for a patient, close examination of the two philological editions of the diary. Yes, two: the critical edition published in 1986, made indispensable by accusations denying the authenticity of the text, labeling it a fraud; and the so-called definitive edition of 1991-the only one approved by the Anne Frank Funds.[14] In

[13] In the United States the copyright will in any case expire in 2047, because American law protects works for 95 years starting from the date of their first publication, which took place in 1952.

[14] Here are the bibliographical references:

- *The Diary of Anne Frank: The Critical Edition*. Prepared by the Netherlands State Institute for War Documentation. David Barnouw and Gerrold van der Stroom, eds. Trans. Arnold J. Pomerans and B. M. Mooyaart-Doubleday (New York: Doubleday, 1989). See also the *Revised Critical Edition*, published in 2003.

Italian bookstores, this approval is made visible by a scarlet band around every copy of the diary on display. This seal of approval transformed into a paratext guarantees the authenticity of the book on sale-a singular case. Both the editions show us that the diary is a layered work; but while the critical edition limits itself to setting out the progressive drafts of the diary, the definitive edition also gives us a new version of the text that is different from the one published in 1947 when the diary first appeared in print.

The new, definitive version is certainly longer (by 25%) and the expansion is due to the reintegration of passages that were missing from the first publication. Cynthia Ozik and many others viewed this reintegration as a much-needed restoration of previously censored materials. But, in reality, a careful comparison between the various editions of the work-of which there are four (*a*, *b*, *c*, and *d*), the beginnings of a philological alphabet-points to a different assessment.[15] Studying the genesis of this text may have

- *The Diary of a Young Girl: The Definitive Edition*, ed. Otto H. Frank and Mirjam Pressler, trans. Susan Masotty (New York: Doubleday, 1995).

[15] For a philological analysis of the *Diary*, see also Philippe Lejeune, "How Anne Frank Rewrote the Diary of Anne Frank," in *On Diary*, ed. Jeremy D. Popkin and Julie Rak, trans. Katherine Durnin (Manoa: University of Hawai's Press, 2009), 237-267; Prose, 'The Book, Part II," in *Anne Frank: The Book, The Life, The*

a disorienting effect, because we are all used to reading the diary as a natural, spontaneous product of Anne Frank's pen. When we read a diary, we imagine that it is an immediate chronicle of everyday events and thoughts, that the traces of its dates have spontaneously transferred the flow of time onto the page, without any retouching. The features of the diary genre, exhaustively inventoried by Philipp Lejeune,[16] are as follows: cryptic allusions, contents that are redundant and vague, a presentation that is fragmentary and confused.

The diary is diametrically opposed to the book: it belongs instead to the order of manuscripts-a manuscript that is eternal, eternally suspended, ignorant of its end and allergic to any retouching. If this is the way things are, an authentic diary, meaning an honest one, is unpublishable. Even more than that: it is unreadable. Anne Frank's diary was no exception: "My writings all

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*Afterlife*, 89-156; Sally Charnow, "Critical Thinking: Scholars Reread the Diary," in *Anne Frank Unbound: Media, Imagination, Memory*, 291-309; Nigel A. Caplan, "Revisiting the *Diary*: Rereading Anne Frank's Rewriting," in *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: Anne Frank's The Diary of Anne Frank-New Edition*, ed. and with and introduction by Harold Bloom (New York: Bloom's Literary Criticism, 2010), 83-100.

[16] Lejeune, "Composing a Diary", in *On Diary*, 168-175.

mixed up, I'm jumping from one thing to another, and sometimes I seriously doubt whether anyone will ever be interested in this drivel. They'll probably call it 'The Musings of an Ugly Duckling.'"[17] The diary was thus a raw proliferation of notes – this was how it remained until 1944, when Anne listening furtively in her hideout heard a radio announcement that encouraged listeners, once the war was over, to publish all personal writings conceived during the years of fear, promoting the creation of a popular, private archive for the benefit of posterity. This announcement gave Anne the momentum to transform her diary into a book, into a text no longer governed by the idiosyncratic, casual laws of someone doing something purely for herself, but rather of something designed for the gaze and judgment of a public. Her instinctive idea was to turn it into a detective novel, a narrative capable of converting the repetitive, documentary flow of the original notes into a text electrified by a gripping plot.

She then started to rewrite the diary, from the beginning, and in the new version her style became more controlled and

[17] Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl: The Definitive Edition*, 261.

mature, more evocative and descriptive. And yet, the project of writing a novel-a work of fiction-did not really take shape: the rewriting instead preserved the essence and structure of the diary. Anne consistently manipulates the original notes, but she does so primarily by condensing and reshaping the information conveyed and by rearranging the dates so that they line up more uniformly in time, as if each day prompted a new observation.

She thus injected a "diary effect," an *effete de journal*,[18] into the new writing, mimicking the contours of the diary, and restraining the spontaneous impulse of the first notes. This was so successful that the new version (*b*, philologically speaking) appears to be more authentic-more honest, as Lejeune would say-than the original one (*a*). The wish for future readers to see her pages inspired the girl to emphasize some parts-especially the desire for assimilation-and to eliminate others: mischievous remarks about her family, the most intimate moments of her love story with Peter, the most uninhibited comments about her sexuality. Anne was thus the first person to censor herself-or to

[18] Lejeune, "The Diary as 'Antifiction,'" in *On Diary*, 207.

edit herself. A careful philological comparison actually demonstrates that the appropriate term for describing the passage from version *a* to version *b* is that of editing: a sophisticated, conscious self-editing.

And now we come to the father: when Otto Frank finished reading the diary that had been preserved from destruction by the hands of Miep Gies, he found two different editions of his daughter's text, both of which were dissatisfying: Anne did not actually manage to rewrite draft *b*, destined for the public, in its entirety; it thus covers a shorter period of time than draft *a*. In preparing the version of the text to be given to the publisher (indicated by the letter *c*), Otto was thus forced to meld together these two drafts. He then thought that it would be a good idea to reintroduce all the parts about Anne's love story that she had expunged out of embarrassment and to protect Peter's anonymity.

Although Otto reintroduced several passages that were streaked with sentimental tones, he also made further cuts: he eliminated off-putting passages about Anne's mother and expunged a part that burns with feminist passion. So what is Otto

Frank's role in the composition of the text? Censor? Coauthor? Curator? Editor? According to some, including Philippe Lejeune and Francine Prose, what this father performed was an excellent job of editing, completing and refining the work that Anne had started on her own. He might reasonably be criticized for not having declared the corrective work that he had performed: for having presented the edition of the diary as a product rather than a process. Could he have done otherwise? Perhaps he might have, even though the diary's success seems to be intimately connected to this philological secretiveness of his, which associated the writings exclusively to his daughter's name, passing over his own contribution and neutralizing his own self.

This affair raises some theoretical issues about the visibility and power of the editor, who in this case acquires a pair of synonyms that are difficult to reconcile and that appear to belong to different lexical classes: censor and coauthor. The question to ask ourselves, then, is: what can an editor do? The myth of editing first appeared, perhaps, with Maxwell Perkins, the legendary editor of Hemingway and Fitzgerald. The editor is cast as a sort of hyper-

reader, who acts on behalf of a community of readers working together to achieve what it considers to be the best publishing outcome. What does 'best' mean in the context in which the diary was originally published? The reality that Otto Frank had to confront was limited by a series of constraints that were more ethical than esthetic in nature: most of his actions seem to have been motivated by a strategy that was quite common in the publishing world after the Second World War, a strategy dictated by a sense of emotional delicacy toward the collective psyche, which was not to be overly upset. (These were the years in Italy when Primo Levi's manuscript *If This is a Man* was rejected repeatedly – because it was too upsetting. Only a small publisher, De Silva, agreed to publish it for him, and in a limited number of copies.)[19]

[19] On the publishing vicissitudes of *If This Is a Man*, see Luisa Mangoni, *Pensare i libri. La casa editrice Einaudi dagli anni trenta agli anni sessanta* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri 1999); Carole Angier, *The Double Bond: The Life of Primo Levi* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux 2002); Ian Thomson, "Writing *If This Is a Man*," in *Primo Levi: The Austere Humanist*, edited by Joseph Farrell (New York: Peter Lang 2004), 156-157; Marco Belpoliti, "Perché *Se questo è un uomo* è stato respinto da Einaudi e da altri editori, ovvero perché è trascorso tanto tempo prima che fosse capito e apprezzato," in *Primo Levi di fronte e di profilo* (Milan: Guanda 2015), 111-121; Anna Baldini, "Primo Levi and the Italian Memory of the Shoah," in *Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History*, July 7, 2014.

Without an editor, does an author exist? Without editing, many fundamental works would never have been published and this would probably have been the fate of the diary, too, had Otto not intervened to sense the atmosphere of his times, positioning himself between the work and the public, acting as mediator, restorer, and even-yes-impresario. It is true that the diary falls under the realm of nonfiction, despite the rewriting that reshaped it, and when nonfiction is involved, the work of editing must be more disciplined and servile than ever. And yet I do not believe that Otto Frank violated the two fundamental precepts of the craft formulated by Maxwell Perkins, which go like this: "An editor should strive for anonymity" and "an editor at most releases energy... He creates nothing."[20] Otto Frank creates nothing, and the decision on the part of the Anna Frank Funds to consider him more than simply an editor, and even a coauthor of the diary, is puzzling.

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[20] Quoted in Gavin James Bower, "The Age of Amazon still needs editors like Max Perkins," in *The Guardian*, October 4, 2013, https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2013/oct/04/age-amazon-editors-max-perkins. See also A. Scott Berg, *Max Perkins: Editor of Genius* (New York: Riverhead, 1997).

It is more than puzzling: the decision is truly disorienting, because now we are no longer authorized to read the version edited by the father I, but exclusively the new definitive version (*d*), the only one approved by the Anne Frank Funds: "there is no other version of the diary that the world can know," pronounces Mirjam Pressler, the writer responsible for this new configuration of the text. "To restore Anne Frank's authentic voice," is the objective to which Mirjam Pressler aspires, and one of the ways she pursues it is to fill in all the gaps that the stratification of the editing opened up. The troubling aspect about this new version is how even Anne's self-editing has been neutralized: for Pressler the "true voice" of the girl supposedly resides in the totality of the original notes, in the uncensored, magmatic writing that spills out in the first draft. But doesn't Anne's authentic voice also reside in the lacunas?

The lacunas-the selection of information that carves out evocative spaces from between the lines-are just as capable and equally entitled to participate in representation as the lines that are traced out. By considering the spaces opened up by Anne as

cavities that swallow up the true, Pressler instead seems to condemn the concept of lacuna to its prime but not exclusive meaning of a geographic depression (from the Latin *lacus*: cavity in the earth). And that is not all: as Lejeune demonstrates, while Pressler cancels out the work of self-editing that had been required to smooth out the rough edges in the original contents, she welcomes the patient, intense syntactic and lexical work to which Anne dedicated herself in order to sublimate the stylistic crudeness of version *a*. The conception of the Pressler edition is thus contradictory, because it presupposes that the reader of today will appreciate Anne's boldness but will be put off by her original stylistic clumsiness.

In addition to denouncing the contradictions of a legal matter that concerns us today, this long exploration into the depths of the diary has shown us that the editing begun by Anne and continued by her father had contributed to the wide diffusion and circulation of the text. Its universalization was therefore premeditated: it arose from between the lines. "One single Anne Frank moves us more than the countless others who suffered just

as she did but whose faces have remained in the shadows. Perhaps it is better that way; if we were capable of taking in all the suffering of all those people, we would not be able to live."[21] This comes from *The Drowned and the Saved* by Primo Levi. Faces, writes Primo Levi. It is significant that he uses this word, materializing before our eyes a conglomerate of anonymous faces beside an endlessly reproduced single face, that of Anne Frank. The face of Anne Frank is a collective face; it is the face of the Shoah; it is the expressive vector of that event. The features of the girl absorb those of the anonymous faces, who in that oval recapture the possibility of a posthumous existence; just as the girl's words do, that by proxy also take on the drowned testimonies of the others, allowing them to survive.

Primo Levi's remark suggests that Anne Frank's pervasiveness is not solely attributable to her words: a crucial role is also played by her image, by her face. Why is this the case? What is special about her face? This, perhaps: it is the face of a

[21] Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved* (New York: Vintage International, 1988), 56.

little girl. Children are particularly iconic because they are abstract, undistorted: the impurities of identity and becoming have not yet accumulated on their hollow, malleable structure, which makes them ready to assume any contour or protuberance. Anne's face, as a child, is a surface onto which any face can be projected (the South Korean cover with which we started only takes this process to an extreme, generating a synthetic face without qualities that can be endlessly embodied.)[22]

The images of children lend themselves enormously to identification: they become a repository of empathic energy and offer themselves up continuously for reproduction, so much so that their evidence as documents is almost automatically converted into the fascination of icons. Identification -with an image or with a narrated series of events-is certainly not an innocuous process. It should be disciplined, without arriving at the point of dissolving the boundaries between the self and the non-self but participating

[22] On the iconicity of Anne Frank, see Brigitte Sion, "Anne Frank as Icon, from Human Rights to Holocaust Denial" and Daniel Belasco, "Suturing In: Anne Frank as Conceptual Model for Visual Art," both in *Anne Frank Unbound*, 193-215 and 254-265. See also Oren Baruch Stier, *Holocaust Icons*. *Symbolizing the Shoah in History and Memory* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2015).

in the experience of others with a degree of empathy that permits the inassimilable peculiarity of the other to be recognized. We are thoughtfully reminded of this by the most self-critical theoreticians of Trauma Studies, like Dominick LaCapra[23] and Marianne Hirsch,[24] who insists on the risk of indiscriminate appropriation specifically in thinking about Anne Frank and her attractive iconicity as a little girl: innocent, vulnerable, wise but also erotic.

Despite all the warnings to approach Anne's image with the appropriate emotional distance, and to read the diary without blurring the important areas of difference and alterity that permeate it, one can hardly remain unaware of how effortlessly this text circulates, disseminating the memory of Anne Frank and the Shoah in a space that by now is definitively globalized.[25] It is a space that

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[23] Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001).

[24] Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory. Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

[25] See Aleida Assmann, "The Holocaust: A Global Memory? Extensions and Limits of a New Memory Community," in *Memory in a Global Age. Discourses, Practices and Trajectories*, ed. Aleida Assmann and Sebastian Conrad (New York: Palgrave Mcmillian, 2010), 79-97; Daniel Levy-Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); *Marking Evil: Holocaust Memory in the Global Age*, ed. Amos Goldberg and Haim Hazan (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015).

assimilates, levels and neutralizes-I am being overly blunt; but I do not take it back, since despite a few counter currents, homogenization is the tool that globalism deploys most readily. With the unlimited expansion of World Literature, the diary can now penetrate into the country most impermeable to globalization, an armored one that borders on the country that printed the book cover reproduced at the beginning of this paper: North Korea.

In 2004 a Dutch television was granted the truly exceptional permission to go into North Korean schools to document the pedagogical uses being made of the *Diary*.[26] What the journalists saw and heard there left them dumbfounded: the diary was being used for propaganda purposes to promote war against America. (George W.) Bush was equated to Hitler and the North Koreans felt persecuted like the Jews. However, although they sympathized with Anne Frank, the students who were interviewed did not approve of the victim character. She is weak,

[26] See Katherine Wilson, "Anne Frank Abroad," in *World Literature Today*, Vol. 87, No. 3 (May/June 2013), 28-33.

they told the journalists. We must not do what she did: we must fight, not hide ourselves.

This case of the diary's reception is really cause for thought, a great deal of it: for a variety of reasons. Here is the most sensational one. The diary, as a vehicle of the Shoah, allows a parallel story of oppression and victimization to be told: the roles of victims and perpetrators are reproduced with perfect symmetry. And yet the North Korean children reject the stance of the victim and everything associated with it, including the paradoxical heroism that normally acts as the catalyst for identification in the position of the victim. The North Korean children are indifferent to the mythological prestige that has gradually come to be heaped on this category. What they see in a victim is only passivity and resignation: aspects of somebody who is in the process of losing the fight for life. Courting paradox, it could even be said that in North Korea there is a process of reception underway that is more nuanced than processes of reception elsewhere that also employ the diary as a paradigm of victimhood and yet signal no difference with respect to the event.

But our inquiry into the diary's circulation cannot end here. There is something disturbing about this dislocation-most probably the bare fact that the text is being led into nomadism, into permanent exile. It is true that there is always a sense of disorientation associated with the dimension of the beyond[27] -and yet, in the era of World Literature, we know very well that this is the fate of all texts. The uneasiness that arises comes from the historical and emotional charge deposited in the pages of Anne Frank, which triggers an instinctive sense of protection when the diary is recodified elsewhere.[28] We seek to protect the text from readings that alter it-and we almost demand that it circulates with ethical interpretations stratified on its surface, giving unity or fixity to its inked signs.[29]And yet, whether we like it or not, Anne and

[27] See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
[28] Invoking a shared collective memory alone creates a problem. What are the expanses and limits of the community of memory that clings to *The Diary of Anne Frank*? It almost seems as if the text questions the vastness and cohesiveness of the community of memory that allows us to sympathize with one another at distance: studying the transnational journey of this work, then, might tell us something, maybe a lot, about the memorial density of human associations.
[29] I believe that the *Diary* is a special text that could very well take its place among the *hard cultural forms* theorized by Appadurai, which is to say, cultural manifestations that are difficult to separate and transform, and that are disturbing when they are exported and altered. See Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

her father were the first to prepare for the global reception of the diary. They were the first editors to neutralize the specific meaning of the Shoah, to transform it into an empty shell: a generic story of generic victims, generic perpetrators, generic young girls.

# Black-American-German Children of Black-American Gis and German Women

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

A rarely discussed topic is what happened to the children fathered by Black-American soldiers and German white women in the aftermath of the Second World War. Children of mixed racial backgrounds were referred to in a racist way, using the term *Mischlingskinder* (mixed race children), a word earlier used by the Nazis to define children of Jewish ancestry. For the purposes of this chapter, the focus will be on the Second World War, Black-American Gis, German women, and the Black-American response to help these children.

The children were referred to as "Brown Babies" by post-war American and German media, some of whom used pejoratives to reference these children. They were not always entirely welcomed by either Germany or the United States. However, Black-Americans did fight hard to promote the adoption of these children; later, West German individuals, families, and groups sought to keep the children in the country and to integrate them

fully into a post-Nazi German society. The attitude towards children of mixed European white and Black ancestry was present. Notably after the First World War, children of Black and German ancestry were called *Mischlingskinder* before the Nazi party was even developed. (Black German Cultural Society, 1999)

The children numbered in the several hundred and were often abandoned, mistreated, and forgotten (Fehrenbach, 2005, pp. 75-77). In the 1925 release *of Mein Kampf,* Adolf Hitler said Jews were to blame for people of African descent living in Germany and other areas of Europe. Hitler's idea that the Jews were polluting the Aryan race fell under his and the party's racial ideologies that only pure Nordic blood was life worth living, and people of color undermined the Nazi plan for a pure racial German state. Hence, As Dane (2019) explained, blaming the Jews for people of African descent residing within Germany became another antisemitic belief falsely perpetrated by the Nazis. Black-Germans were ostracized, harmed, violated, and mistreated. Persecutions continued, and then under the Nazis, abuses were legalized.

Starting on 14 July 1933, with the passage of the Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases, Black-Germans in Nazi Germany could be forcibly sterilized. During the Nazi regime, from 1933-1945, Black-Germans were arrested, persecuted, tortured, and killed. As Zane (2019) explained, children of mixed racial ancestry did not fare well either; these children fell under the same category as asocials, Roma, Jews, and others once the 1935 Nuremberg Laws were passed. Black children and adults were then banned from schools. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (2022) explained that even before the Nuremberg Laws, once the Nazis came to power, interracial couples were attacked, harassed, and abused.

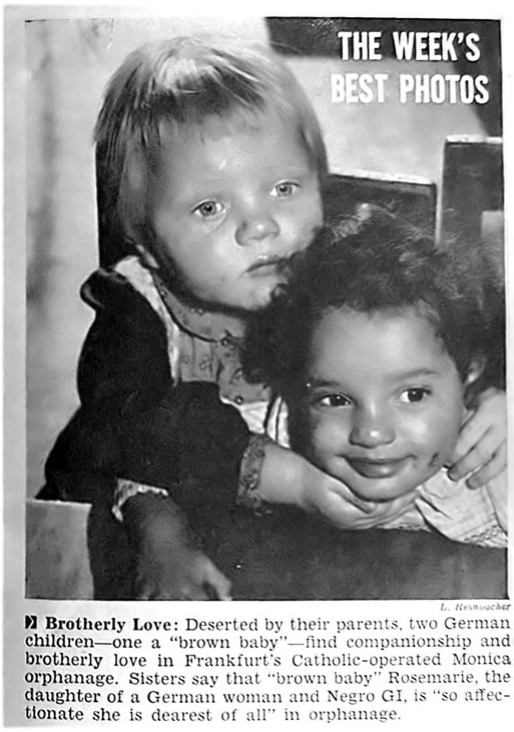
After the end of the Second World War, the fate of Black-American-German children was fraught with danger, displacement, and abandonment. Abebola (2014) explained how relationships between German white women and Black-American Gis that resulted in children often resulted in the babies being left in orphanages. Citing the film *Brown Babies: The Mischlingskinder Story*, Abedola (2014) related that

> many of the children ended up being adopted or sent to orphanages because their German mothers feared the public scrutiny that came with having a mixed-race child out of wedlock. Some of the Black soldiers who wanted to marry their German girlfriends found it difficult because the relationships were viewed as forbidden. Those who wanted to return home to the African-American girlfriends and sometimes wives didn't want to bring along children whose presence would indicate they had been unfaithful (Abedola, 2014, para. 4).

Although numerous American soldiers desired to marry their German partners, official military regulations prohibited these unions. Furthermore, sudden troop transfers at the war's end and during the early Cold War abruptly severed these relationships. As a result, many servicemen returned to the United States completely unaware that they had left children behind (Black German Cultural Society 2026).

So, what happened to the children once their fate became publicly known after the war? The Black German Cultural Society (2026) related that 10,000 Afro-German babies were born out of the 95,000 total babies born to German mothers and American forces fathers. This image of an unnamed German boy and a young Afro-German girl named Rosemarie, both under the care of

Frankfurt's Monica Orphanage, poignantly begins to open this discussion about these vulnerable children, as seen in this image:


THE WEEK'S
BEST PHOTOS
L. Reinbacher
Brotherly Love: Deserted by their parents, two German children—one a "brown baby"—find companionship and brotherly love in Frankfurt's Catholic-operated Monica orphanage. Sisters say that "brown baby" Rosemarie, the daughter of a German woman and Negro GI, is "so affectionate she is dearest of all" in orphanage.

"Two children at the Frankfurt's Catholic-operated Monica Orphanage in Frankfurt, Germany. Photo by L. Reinbacher, originally featured in Jet magazine, circa 1950s. Included here under Fair Use for educational purposes."

Rosemarie, as the caption noted, was the "dearest" of all of the babies in the orphanage.

Abedola (2014) explained that people such as the socialite Mabel Grammer worked as a journalist for the *Afro American*. Grammer, who became a mother of twelve Black-American German children, worked tirelessly to campaign for Black-

Americans to adopt the abandoned children. Some German families took in the children as well, as Fehrenbach (2005) revealed; Fehrenbach also related that sometimes German adopters were pressured by Black-American agencies and individuals to give up their children so that they could become American citizens instead and cited the case of the Lißner family, who refused to give up their baby Doni when asked to do so. Not all German families would take in and keep children; the need was great for adopters.

Black-Americans such as Walter White of the NAACP and countless others worked tirelessly to support interracial adoptions. White was deeply horrified that West Germany was said to have developed a plan to put Afro- German children in holding centers, stating that "is Germany to be allowed to substitute her concentration camps and persecution of the Jews for *children* who happened to be brown in color? Heaven help us!" (Fehrenbach, 2005, p. 133). To combat this, Walter White and others worked to leverage the press to mobilize the African-American and Black-American community to promote these adoptions. Some white Americans rose to the call to help the children, such as the best-

selling author Pearl Buck, who adopted several bi-racial children. Fehrenbach (2005) explained championed the effort and personally adopted several biracial children.

As Fehrenbach (2005) explained, tens of thousands of children with American G.I. ancestry across Germany, Japan, and other occupied nations faced abandonment due to a variety of systemic factors. Many soldiers were completely unaware they had fathered a child, while many local mothers were left financially destitute or due to maternal death, the children were orphaned. Ultimately, the pervasive chaos of the postwar era made full family reunification or local placement impossible, prompting humanitarians like Margaret Ethel Butler to persistently advocate for these vulnerable children.

Moved by a picture of the orphans, Margaret Ethel Butler of Chicago adopted two children. However, “unlike Pearl Buck, who sought to demonstrate the irrelevance of skin color in forming affective relationships, Margaret Ethel Butler and other prospective African American parents tended to be motivated by notions of racial identity and responsibility” (Fehrenbach, 2005, p. 133).

Fehrenbach (2005) explained that beyond adoption efforts, Black newspapers and magazines, including *Ebony,* pleaded with their readers to send money and supplies to Germany. The funds were mean to go to the care of their children to also help mothers who wanted to keep their babies, despite ostracization for doing so. Additionally, humanitarian advocates encountered immense political and logistical hurdles in delivering aid to these infants.

Because of racism in the United States, and the lack of support from many American officials in Germany, people like Butler, Fehrenbach (2005) noted, faced obstacles, prejudice, and even hate mail for adopting Black-American-German children, unlike most German media, which widely praised people like Butler for her desire to help and to adopt the unwanted children. The adoption statistics were low.

Data compiled by Fehrenbach (2005) reveals the complex structural choices facing these families: roughly 10% of Afro-German infants and children were placed in West German orphanages, while fewer than 13% of biological mothers ultimately chose to relinquish custody of their children. Notably, these

historical studies focused exclusively on the Western zones, as statistical data from East Germany was typically unavailable following the nation's formal division into two separate countries in 1949. Over time, these local figures culminated in a massive transatlantic migration network. By 1968, “experts estimated that in the two decades since the war as many as seven thousand Black-German children had been adopted by American citizens. Virtually all the prospective parents were black” (Fehrenbach 2005, 133).

Due to pervasive domestic racism, some activists, such as Lester Granger, openly questioned whether these children would be better off staying in Germany rather than migrating to the United States. Granger argued that “these [are] colored children in this country, in Georgia for example, who probably were much worse off than the colored children in Germany” (Fehrenbach 2005, 146). When debating this issue, both Granger and White were weighing the stark realities of Jim Crow segregation against the changing landscape of postwar West Germany. As Fehrenbach (2005) elucidates, while African American children faced institutionalized segregation at home, the newly formed West

German educational system officially mandated full integration, offering a sharp contrast to the racial policies of the former Nazi regime.

Fehrenbach (2005) explored how West German periodicals wrote on American race relations and the Civil Rights movement, with many journalists arguing that Black-American-German children were better off in West Germany than in the United States, where children faced violence and murder, for example, noting the 1957 events in Little Rock, and then in the 1963 Birmingham school bombing where four Black girls were killed and others severely injured.

Further, when speaking of the children, Nuremberg youth worker Dr. Dorothea Struwe argued that by keeping Black-American-German children in West Germany, not only were the children safer, that the children "can help us make good some of the guild we have laden upon us in the past. We can do so by approaching these children with tolerance and free of prejudice and by giving them full possibilities for their development" (Fehrenbach 2014, p. 168). Therefore, following this argument, we

then see how a post-war West Germany argued that they were more tolerant than their American counterparts by giving Black-American-German children equal access to education and societal parity, noting that

> in just over a decade, since Hitler's defeat, a chastened nation [West Germany] appeared to have surpassed its tutor [the United States] in the lessons of democracy and was credentialed to that effect by the favorable reviews of African-American organizations and the press. By the turn of the 1960s, West German officials could point to their treatment of the *Mischlingskinder* and claim a moral victory in the area of race relations. (Fehrenbach 2014, p. 168).

Despite this assertion, many mixed-race children in West Germany faced hardship, cruelty, and disdain; many faced the same prejudices coming of age in the United States as Black America fought for Civil Rights.

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So shalt thou
feed on Death,
That feeds on
men,
And, Death once
dead, There's no
more dying
then

Shakespeare, *Sonnet* 146, 13.

**Unit Six: Gender and the Holocaust**

When examining gender and the Holocaust, there are many nuances to the subject. Here, we examine LGBTQ in the context of Paragraph 175, LGBTQ and resistance, transactional female leadership from a wife of a top-ranking Nazi official, female perpetrators, how gender was constructed in Nazi Germany, and much more. Starting with perhaps the most well-known woman of the Third Reich after Eva Braun is Magda Goebbels, and here, Adelé-Marie asserts how Magda positioned herself to attain the title of "first lady of the Reich."

**The First Lady of the Reich:**

**Magda Goebbels and Leadership in Nazi Germany**

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

Johanna Maria Magdalena "Magda" Goebbels (1901-1945) held power and prestige as a wife, mother, and woman. She served as a leader for women in Nazi Germany (1933-1945) because of her beauty, fecundity, and close, intimate relationship with Adolf Hitler. Magda Goebbels was married twice; Meissner (1980) noted her first husband, Günther Quandt, the multi-millionaire founder of

dozens of companies, including BMW, with whom she had one child, a son, Harald, elevated her status socially in German circles. Richter (2018) said that marriage to Quandt gave her financial security. However, her second marriage to Joseph Goebbels, the *Reichsminister für Propaganda* [Reich Minister for Propaganda], helped establish her as a leader to German women. According to Adelé-Marie (2010), with Joseph, Magda had six more children in rapid succession. However, the marriage strained continuously due to Joseph's constant cheating and belittling Magda, sometimes publicly, by criticizing how she looked or flirting with other women in her presence.

Adelé-Marie (2010) further related that when the couple discussed divorce with Hitler personally, Hitler forbade it as the image of the Reich's first family collapsing would not go over well with the German people. As observed by Spielvogel (2010), Hitler implied that if Joseph Goebbels, a serial philander, went through with the divorce, demotion would be first, with other punishments to come; Joseph Goebbels backed down, and the couple stayed married.

Spielvogel (2010) also noted that Joseph Goebbels was keenly jealous of Magda's closeness to Hitler. Rupp (1977) perceived that Hitler admired Magda so much he unofficially gave her the task of opening some of his mail or even acting for him at public functions with a mostly female audience, posing for pictures together. For Magda, her marriage to Joseph Goebbels elevated her social status, "which in turn positioned them to maintain post-war romantic myths of the Third Reich as a new world order based on racial supremacy via domesticity and fertility" (Adelé-Marie, 2020, p. 726). A fresh look at how Magda constructed her image and how she positioned herself alongside Hitler will demonstrate that she held an unofficial leadership role in the Third Reich.

**Magda Goebbels**

Williams (2018) stated that Magda was born in 1901 to Auguste Behrend, an unwed mother who married Oskar Ritschel. Williams noted that Magda's birth certificate for the father's name remained blank, even after the marriage to Oskar. Auguste and Oskar divorced, and after moving to Belgium, Auguste married a Jewish man, Richard Friedlander, who adopted Magda, gave her

his last name, and with whom Magda grew close. Meissner (1980) wrote of Magda's mother, Auguste, deciding to send Magda to a Catholic school but that Magda was interested in and observed more of Friedlander's Jewish customs than Catholic ones. After the war, Meissner revealed, Magda's parents divorced, and Auguste took her daughter back to Berlin. While there is no proof, *The Jewish Chronicle* (2016) suggested that Magda did not stay in touch with Friedlander once after the divorce.

Interestingly, *The Jewish Chronicle* related that historian Oliver Hilmes uncovered new research that Magda, who had a Jewish boyfriend, lied about her background, and denounced the Friedlander name, using Ritschel instead. *The Jewish Chronicle* (2016) argued that Hilmes proved that Friedlander was murdered in the concentration camp Buchenwald in 1939. Richter (2018) suggested that Magda's relationship with her first husband, the industrialist Günther Quandt, who was antisemitic, convinced Magda to change her name from Friedlander back to Ritschel and join the Nazi party, where she later met Joseph Goebbels. Quandt

and Magda divorced, and he was quite generous with the divorce settlement, leading to her financial independence.

***Pseudo-Transformational Leader***

After Magda's first divorce, since there was enough money to live comfortably, she entertained the idea of "going to university to become a lawyer or a designer" (Vitkine, 2017). Magda's mother, Auguste, said that "Magda was bored" but soon would find her cause, which ended up being Nazisim (Vitkine, 2017). In the summer of 1930, due to her ex-husband Quandt's encouragement, Magda attended a meeting of the Nazi party, was impressed, and joined. Still, it was when Magda, "who had previously not been interested in politics, first heard Joseph Goebbels speak," that she became obsessed with the idea of herself as an ultimate Aryan feminine archetype leader (Schaake and Bäurle, 2001, p. 180).

When Magda and Joseph first met, Schaake and Bäurle (2001) revealed that at first, she was not attracted to Joseph "on account of his small stature, as he was a contradiction to the ideal of the big blond Teuton" male (p.180). What probably enticed her

to start a relationship with the eccentric propagandist Joseph was not his intellect, even though he was well-spoken, with a Ph.D., the attraction was undoubtedly his direct connection to Hitler, whom she deeply admired. For Joseph, Magda was the epitome of Aryan beauty, and in turn, marriage to her because of her beauty, wealth, and elegance brought him a form of status. Marriage for the two, then, was mutually beneficial. Once she met Goebbels, Meissner (1980) promoted the idea that it was Hitler who pushed for the marriage between Magda and Goebbels. Hitler encouraged the wedding so that he could use his propaganda expert's wife as de-facto first lady, staying single as to promote himself as every woman's man: "Hitler saw himself as the father of the nation, and as a surrogate husband of sorts for the German women, their ultimate and omnipresent protector" (Adelé-Marie, 2020, p. 728).

Consequently, for her if Magda could not become a lawyer, she could become a leader. By marrying Joseph Goebbels, one of the most powerful men in Nazi Germany, the *Reichsminister für Propaganda* [Reich Minister for Propaganda], "she successfully combined her public role as an important Aryan woman with

marriage and then motherhood" (Adelé-Marie, 2020, p. 727). Once they married, the Goebbels became a power couple and enjoyed a close relationship with Hitler. At least at first with Joseph, and then with Hitler, for Magda, these relationships may have fulfilled all five of Maslow's hierarchy of Maslow's, especially esteem and self-actualization, which psychologist Margarete Mitscherlich alluded to in the documentary *Hitler's Women: Magda Goebbels* (Hartl, 2001). Many German women adopted Magda for Hitler a notion of a stand-in first lady of the Reich, including this author's paternal grandparents; their son was given the names of two top Nazi figures (Adelé-Marie, 2010, p. 35).

Since Magda had many babies, she could publicly fill different forms of pseudo-transformational leadership: elegance, fertility, motherhood, and above all, undying commitment to Hitler as his companion, and who she lovingly encouraged her children to refer to Hitler as an uncle. In turn, Hitler was devoted to the children, as Meissner (1980) revealed, visiting them often, and posing for pictures, especially with the eldest daughter Helga (pp. 95-105). The Goebbels children posed for film and photos with

their parents and Hitler, which further enhanced their mother's pseudo-transformational leadership role as the ultimate fertile Aryan woman (Meissner, 1980, pp. 95-105).

**Nazi Views on Fertility**

The Nazis continually emphasized fertility, especially when World War One and the global flu pandemic decimated the German population. Joseph Goebbels (1934) gave a speech to a group of women in Berlin. Joseph said that countries with low birthrates declined and blamed modernity, stating that "a characteristic of the modern era is a rapidly declining birthrate in our big cities" (Goebbels, 1934, para. 11). In the same speech, he also (1934) acknowledged that some women had to work and that working women deserved recognition, but ultimately, as he said, for the German woman that

> her most glorious duty is to give children to her people and nation, children who can continue the line of generations and who guarantee the immortality of the nation. The woman is the teacher of the youth, and therefore the builder of the foundation of the future. If the family is the nation's source of strength, the woman is its core and center. The best place for the woman to serve her people is in her marriage, in the family, in motherhood. This is her highest mission. (para. 8)

Adelé-Marie (2010) affirmed how the Nazis underscored this charge and related that the Nazi view on women was that they had "Hitler saw himself as the father of the nation, and as a surrogate husband of sorts for the German women, their ultimate and omnipresent protector. Women were to be wedded to the state by devoting their bodies for reproductive purposes of Nazi Germany" (p. 728). For some incredibly fertile women, they received the *Mutterkreuz*, the Cross of Honour of the German mother, a medal developed in honor of Hitler's mother that came in bronze, silver, or gold, much like an Olympic medal: "these medals came in three versions, bronze (four children), silver (six children) and gold (eight children)" with Magda – the recipient of the very first medal - received a silver medal for having seven children, Harald with her first husband Günther Quandt and six more with Joseph Goebbels (Adelé-Marie, 2010, p. 5). Therefore, Magda Goebbels, who was pregnant through most of her second marriage, was the perfect archetype of a fertile, feminine leader, ready to serve the state.

**First Lady of the Reich**

Magda's relationship with Hitler was deeply intimate and supposedly caused Joseph Goebbels some concern. However, Guenther (2004) related that Goebbels was a serial adulterer whose behavior embarrassed Magda and caused Hitler to admonish him. Magda "seemed like the perfect candidate for First Lady of the Reich. She was blonde, and had ice-cold blue eyes, which was practically the prerequisite for the Aryan ideal" (Guenther, 2004, p. 131). Furthermore, Guenther (2004) stated that Magda was "fiercely loyal to Hitler. Magda also shared Hitler's fervent antisemitism, conveniently forgetting her past Jewish connections. Williams (2018) noted that once she had joined the party, she worked to recruit more women and campaigned for the Nazis. More importantly, she embodied the party's leading tenet about women – motherhood.

Guenther (2004) also noted that Magda was simply a close friend of Hitler who loved to spend time with her and their children, who adored Hitler (pp. 131-133). As Williams (2018) alleged, Joseph Goebbels wanted his family to be the nation's "first family" and his wife as Hitler's non-sexual companion. As

long as his self-serving interests were never subverted or threatened by other party members who jumped at the chance to promote their wives, Goebbels was only too happy to leave Magda with Hitler, knowing how much her presence pleased the *Führer*. However, even though Magda was intelligent, ambitious, elegant, and close to Hitler, Magda was ambitious, outspoken, wore makeup, smoked in public. She had also been the target of ongoing gossip that she was a "Jew-lover" who had a "torrid love affair" with a "fervent Zionist, Chaim Vitalty Arlosoroff" (Guenther, 2004, p. 132). Proven, even Magda would not have been safe.

A relationship with a Jew like Arlosoroff was unlawful: "We must always attempt to persuade each German-blooded woman who is considering a relationship with a foreigner that her behavior is improper, inconsistent with the racial expectations of society. It must be clear that such behavior is a crime" (*Nachrichtendienst der Reichsfrauenführung Sonderdienst*, 1941, para. 17). Magda, who had a "love of fashionable and expensive clothes," always promoting herself as "best-dressed women in Germany that collided with images of home-spun, homemade

dirndls" (Guenther, 2004, p. 133). Nonetheless, Magda had severe competition for the first lady's title. It was not a woman who, like the outlandish Emmy, wore tiaras to the opera and had ballgowns made from confiscated curtains from Polish castles (Guenther, 2004, p. 133). Consequently, one woman came close to supplanting Magda in the public's opinion as Germany's number-one mother, Gertrud Scholtz-Klink.

**Gertrud Scholtz-Klink**

Guenther (2004) advanced the idea that the Nazi party instead preferred Gertrud Scholtz-Klink as the Reich's first mother. Guenther (2004) said this was especially true of Scholtz-Klink, who liked to wear her hair in tight braids and traditional costume; thus, she "embodied female perfection as constructed by Nazi ideologies – a Nordic priestess preaching the cult of womanhood." Scholtz-Klink, whose image was on hundreds of propaganda posters, was a widow who remarried a General, had several children, and not politically connected. She was, however, a fanatical Nazi who embraced everything the party stood for, including the image of a German woman as peasant-like; this

perhaps led to Magda referring to Scholtz-Klink as a "cow" and "insolent and impertinent" (Guenther, 2004, p. 138). Adelé-Marie (2020) said that

> Gertrud Scholtz-Klink, a widow and mother of four children, was the head of the Nazi Women's League (NS-*Frauenschaft*). The League recruited thousands of women to help construct a Nazi woman's proper imaging in the *Volksgemeinschaft* [national community]. This woman was subservient to men, understood her role in the private sphere, and emphasized profound fertility. (p. 738)

Despite many female candidates jockeying for a position at Hitler's side, he preferred to remain single with elegant ladies publicly accompanying him. If Hitler did not have a current love interest, he often asked the Goebbels to accompany him, whether to a theater opening or a speech. Although Hitler had proclaimed other women as his first lady, such as Hermann Göring's second wife Emmy, she fell out of favor due to her ostentatious displays of wealth during wartime rationing (Guenther, 2004, p. 134).

Therefore, it was Magda continually constructed as Hitler's acceptable first lady. Notably, Guenther (2004) illustrated that Hitler loved to be surrounded by elegant women, and the more, the better, and especially by a woman like Magda who never tired of

him. She accompanied him everywhere to the opera or dinners, always paying rapt attention to his diatribes, referring to Hitler as godlike; in reverence, she said he was "not human, unreachable, untouchable," which was wholly unrealistic (Spielvogel, 2010, p. 124).

**Outcomes**

The significance of studying leadership roles in times of war contributes to scholarship that has largely ignored women's leadership roles in wartime in previous decades. Recently, scholars such as Daniel Patrick Brown, Irene Guenther, and Rochelle Saidel began to change that shift in scholarship to address the gap in examining women's roles during the Third Reich. Hitler's inner circle, and those he enjoyed surrounding himself with, were mainly women. Rupp (1977) revealed Hitler's intimate associates were mostly women. Rupp (1977) asserted that this circle consisted of a female chef, secretaries, and women like Winifred Wagner, daughter-in-law of famed composer and Hitler's favorite cultural icon Richard Wagner, to Hannah Reitsch, a test pilot who was the only woman decorated by the *Luftwaffe* [German Airforce]. In

vain, the latter tried to help Hitler escape from his Berlin bunker as the Soviets were closing in in April 1945. Other women played critical roles in Nazi Germany. Baroness Karin von Kantzow, Hermann Göring's first wife, Adelé-Marie (2020), revealed played a role in helping Hitler secure a publishing deal for *Mein Kampf* [My Struggle].

**Summary**

Magda Goebbels served as a leader to millions of German women who wanted to emulate her beauty, style, and image. Her beauty, public professionalism, leadership abilities represented through public appearances constructed her as the Reich's ultimate first lady. Adelé-Marie (2010) noted that for Magda, this was a leadership position that even Hitler's long-suffering girlfriend, Eva Braun, whom he considered provincial and often mocked to her face, could not have held. Eva's primary achievement was staying loyal to Hitler even as he hid her away, never publicly acknowledging his relationship with her. Guenther (2004) observed that Hitler also allegedly mentally and emotionally

abused Eva, making fun of her, which may have led to two suicide attempts.

Hitler preferred to remain publicly single since “Hitler saw himself as the father of the nation, and as a surrogate husband of sorts for the German women, their ultimate and omnipresent protector” (Adelé-Marie, 2020, pp. 727-728). Therefore, Hitler became every woman’s man; whether she needed a father, husband, or patriarchal support figure, he would be that for German women.

With married women as his social companions to the female public, Adelé-Marie (2020) argued, Hitler seemed available to all women, as he “relied on the devotion and support of women even though he banished them to the periphery of political life” (p. 731). Compared to the Nazi agrarian female typification, Magda was overly stylish. To Hitler, Magda was the ultimate companion who adored him but was ultimately unattainable and not a threat to the female public; this was due to her marriage to Joseph Goebbels, a factor which may have been why Hitler refused to allow the couple to divorce.

Although Magda had carefully crafted her image, Meissner (1980) stated that she was a depressed woman in constant pain due to neurological nerve disease. She was obsessively devoted to Hitler, married to a serial adulterer, and chose to kill herself and her six children with Goebbels at the end of the war rather than live in a world without Nazism. According to Vitkine (2017), Magda revealed that in her suicide note to her eldest son, Harald Quandt, how honored she was that on the day Hitler died, Hitler gave her his personal Nazi party pin. Magda related that Hitler had told her how proud he was that she had always stood by him. Magda also wrote to her eldest son that she was going to kill his six half-siblings:

> The world that comes after the *Führer* and national socialism is not any longer worth living in, and therefore, I took the children with me, for they are too good for the life that would follow, and a merciful God will understand me when I will give them the salvation." (Adelé-Marie, 2020, p. 725)

Magda's suicide note suggested how she saw herself at the start of the regime as a transformational leader that would transform German women. Then, in the end, in her twisted logic, she set

another example as a woman ready to sacrifice herself and her children for the one man who sacrificed himself for Germany.

For the brief thirteen years of the Third Reich, Magda served as an ultimate maternal pseudo-transformational leader for women. While Magda held no official title, Adelé-Marie (2020) said that Magda's leadership role was one that she underscored in "an interview with the *Vossische Zeitung*, a German newspaper" (Adelé-Marie, 2020, p. 733). Magda, referred to as the "First Lady of the Reich," strongly asserted that

> when the German woman is confronted with the choice between marriage and career, she will always be encouraged to choose marriage since that is undoubtedly best for a woman. I am attempting to make the German woman more beautiful. (Adelé-Marie, 2020, p. 733)

Magda believed it was her moral duty to make German women the most elegant women globally, and her devotion to Hitler indicates, perhaps, a frustrated woman. Magda never became a lawyer or a designer, had two unhappy marriages, and was ultimately unable to hold political power herself. She could not have done so in a hypermasculine regime that excluded most women from political service, as even though women could become Nazi party members,

"women were categorically denied any position of power within the party" (Adelé-Marie, 2020, p. 25). Ultimately, as a beautiful maternal role model, Magda failed, as she was a monstrous murderer that directly participated in the murder of her six youngest children before she killed herself.

Therefore, this essay, which supported analysis, research, and affirmed specialized content knowledge, deconstructed Magda's image. Outlining her role as a pseudo-transformational leader in the Third Reich offers critical intervention towards studies that privilege Nazi women's status, moral and political righteousness.

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# The Construction of a Counter-World War II Memory

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

*Special note:* this paper was first presented at the ACLA conference in 2019 and served as the foundation for "Aryan Femininity: Identity in the Third Reich," in Aarons V., Lassner P. (eds). *The Palgrave Handbook of Holocaust Literature and Culture*. New York: Palgrave, 2020. Citations are left intact from the original work.

The cultural production of World War II memory and memorialization has focused primarily on the conflict between Allies and Axis powers, or the Nazi perpetrated Holocaust. Consistent with the neglected narratives of women in other polities who wielded power "behind the scenes," women involved in the Nazi party and their self-representations offer a more comprehensive history of women's critical influences. My analysis will consider how marriage to the primary architects of the Final Solution elevated the social status of most women, which in turn positioned them to maintain romantic myths of the Third Reich as a new world order based on racial supremacy.

Theoretically, this paper will offer critical intervention in studies that privilege women's moral and political righteousness and resistance to oppression. Three primary foci will emerge: contemporary identity in the "quest for Nazi female perfection" to stand as "the First Lady of the Reich; imaging of wives and their husbands post-war, and some filmic constructions of "Nazi women" from the past five decades.[30]

My study of Magda Goebbels, Lina Heydrich, and Veronika (Vera) Eichmann, wives of powerful Nazi officials, provides key examples of women's influential roles within Adolf Hitler's innermost circle as well as their influence on Nazi ideology and practice. Although Nazi ideology and policy pressured women to activate the new romantic domesticity that was sweeping Germany, a study of these women's self-

[30] Irene Guenther, *Nazi Chic: Fashioning Women in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), p. 138. Guenther further explained that "Clearly, grabbing a top spot in German society as the wife of a Nazi official did not always translate into a step-up in style or refinement. But then, the National Socialists were not always known for their sophisticated taste. In an effort to broaden the appeal of the Party symbol, the swastika surfaced as a decorative motif on virtually every consumer product available – on dog collars, bed sheets, matchbooks, and the water glasses of Nazi dignitaries. It even appeared as head ornament in the form of a woman's hat, on fruit drop candies, and embroidered onto sexy silk camisoles." Ibid., 136.

representations demonstrates that Nazi women were instrumental in designing and executing their state-constructed subservient role. My analysis will then argue that their influence extended to constructing a memory that shaped their husbands as innocent bystanders and their images as exemplary German patriots in the postwar period. Critical examination of these women's self-representations shows that Nazi wives knew much more about their husbands' roles than they would admit. Focusing on their disavowal of their own and their spouse's culpability reveals significant new insights into a different kind of resistance: against the exposure of Nazi atrocities and attempts to de-Nazify the nation.

A key example of how this resistance to de-Nazification prevailed decades later is a 1979 interview in which Lina Heydrich asserted that her husband Reinhard, *SS-Obergruppenführer, General der Polizei* as well as chief of the Reich Main Security Office, "had nothing to do with [the Final Solution]."[31] Lina was

[31] "Widow of Heydrich Says 'Holocaust' Ignores Facts" *The New York Times*. February 7, 1979, p. 2. Lina also wrote to many periodicals "correcting"

blonde, curvy, and maternal, and saw herself as an ideal representative of the Nazi government, (yet she sought little public attention until much after the war had ended and then only in the context of "righting the wrongs" against what she considered false attacks on her husband's memory), as it was believed that she was the one who had encouraged Heydrich to apply to the SS for employment.

After Heydrich rose in power, later Lina was not afraid to state her opinion about her contemporaries, and was said to have belittled even Margarete Himmler, the wife of *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler – her husband's superior officer - calling her "bourgeous, humourless, and stingy" with "facial twitches."[32] This demonstrates that women competed amongst themselves as to who looked the part of the ideal Aryan woman; status and marriage did not stop women from engaging critical commentary of one another. This criticisms of each other shows that women like Lina sought an informal agency of status within the regime as the

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them for what she alleged were falsehoods against Reinhard Heydrich's memory.

[32] Guenther, p. 136.

ultimate model of Aryan femininity. After her husband's death in 1942, she continued to memorialize him until her death. In 1976, she wrote a book *Leben mit einem Kriegsverbrecher* (Life with a war criminal; later reissued as *My Life with Reinhard*). Because Heydrich died a general, after the war she successfully petitioned the West German government for a pension, which she received.[33] In 1979, Lina, at the time of the interview, was photographed with a brass funeral mask of her husband over her head. She was also filmed lovingly polishing it, denying the entire time that her first husband had any culpability for the Holocaust, instead, she argued, he was a wonderful husband who got caught up in Nazi politics.

Along with other Nazi wives, Lina Heydrich remained committed to the myth of Nazi triumphalism. Lina constructed herself as an innocent widow, a mother of four children, whose father was not in any way responsible for the crimes of the Third Reich.[34] This insistent denial offers an opportunity to combine

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[33] Note Robert Gerwarth's *Hitler's Hangman: The Life of Heydrich* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), 2011, *passim*.

[34] The Heydrich's daughter, Silke, also sought a post-war memorialization of her father. In a December 28, 1971 interview, Silke, a model, argued that "was my father an evil man? If he really was, I should be able to feel this within myself. I have watched myself for a long time and didn't

historical and rhetorical analysis of the construction of a counter World War II memory by women whose gender identities and roles advance research on the war and its aftermath. The great irony is that millions of women (it has been estimated that some thirteen million women were active in Nazi party groups from 1933-1945) supported to the end a regime that at heart had an abiding contempt for the female gender.

National Socialists sought to return women to subordinate positions in German society, which meant from the 1933 onset of power that women were to disregard any prior economic, political, or societal quest for emancipation. Women were to return to their domestic spheres, and, preferably, proudly have babies for the Fatherland (Hitler had emphasized this in a 1935 speech where he argued women could fight for her country via her fertility), with fertilization used as a racial weapon, a fertility armament overseen by women (although answerable to men, and, ultimately, Hitler himself).

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feel anything of the sort." See Joachim Moskau, "Nazi Children Reflect on Dad." *Boca Raton News*, December 28, 1971.

Using women, National Socialism wanted to eliminate, "within a hundred years, the dark German type by mating them with blonde women" in order to create a super race of 'racially' pure, blonde haired, blue eyed people.[35] To succeed in this goal, which the Nazis believed was necessary so that pure Germanic blood would survive, the regime established a hundred-year plan, conceived in part by Heinrich Himmler, Hitler's *Reichsführer*, *SS*. Himmler established "*Lebensborn* [Spring of Life], an SS maternity organization whose main function was to adopt racially suitable children for childless SS families and to assist racially sound unwed mothers and their children."[36] Children who matched racial Aryan tenets, with the hopes of creating the blonde super race, were stolen and given to SS families to raise; over 12,000 children were kidnapped and given to SS families.[37] *Lebensborn* was also described as "stud farms where SS men and suitable young women

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[35] John Toland, *Adolf Hitler* (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1976), p. 764.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Andrew Malone. "Stolen by the Nazis: The tragic tale of 12,000 blue-eyed blond children taken by the SS to create an Aryan super-race." *The Daily Mail Online*. www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1111170/Stolen-Nazis-The-tragic-tale-12-000-blue-eyed-blond-children-taken-SS-create-Aryan-super-race.html (23 April 2010).

were mated to breed a master race." [38] A government that encouraged fertility in such a way, and used women to achieve racial goals certainly did not view women in an egalitarian fashion, nor were full civil and political rights for them promoted. Propaganda, literature and film helped support these constructs.

While many women were marginalized during the regime in order to assert Hitler's political ideology, they could find agency within their private spheres should they wish it or have the ability to do so, especially to memorialize their own sense of importance.[39] Moreover, the societal marginalization espoused by Nazism helped to authenticate the hyper-aggressive Nazi masculine ideal. If women returned to the domestic sphere, and if

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[38] See Toland, p. 764 and refer to "Stolen by the Nazis" for more on what happened to the women who had babies with SS men, and for some reference on what happened to the children.

[39] See Claudia Koonz, "A Tributary and a Mainstream: Gender, Public Memory, and Historiography of Nazi Germany" in *Gendering Modern Germany History: Rewriting Historiography,* edited by Karen Hagemann and Jean H. Quataert (New York: Bergbahn Books, 2007), especially pp. 151-152, where Koonz states that it was true of oppression regimes where when private spheres are mandated as the norm for women, where it can then be seen how these actors "simultaneously allowed the women who operated within those spheres to exert agency, in fact, that is precisely how oppression functions. Ordinary women could be the victims of misogyny as well as beneficiaries (and sometimes facilitators) of racial persecution."

the enemy of the German man was destroyed, the Nazi ideal of masculinity would reign supreme; the enemy of the German man was defined as the Jew.[40] However, despite the masculine-oriented ideology of the Nazi party, during the 1930s and 1940s, many women in Germany proudly paid allegiance to the Third Reich. This was in spite of Nazi beliefs that mandated women do not interfere with the principles of the party. Although women could not join the elite sectors of the Nazi party, they could marry a Nazi official to gain authority.

Women such as Magda Goebbels, wife of propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels, especially personified the ideal Aryan German wife and also the mother. She and Goebbels had six children, and a very troubled marriage. Perhaps in way to escape her misery, Magda constructed a role for herself as the leading lady of Nazi Germany. In an interview with the *Vossische Zeitung*, a German newspaper, Magda, referred to as the "First Lady of the Reich," strongly asserted that "when the German woman is

[40] Enemies that were non-Jews were defined as, but not limited to: Communists, the disabled, mentally ill, political dissenters, Roma, and people belonging to various religious sects such as the Seventh Day Adventists.

confronted with the choice between marriage and career then she always will be encouraged to choose marriage since that is undoubtedly best for a woman. I am attempting to make the German woman more beautiful."[41] Images such as the ones Magda presented were memorialized in periodicals such as *Frauen Warte* and others.

Magda, who presented as the perfect German woman, with pale blonde hair and blue eyes, personally attempted to make the Nazi ideal of the German (and later Austrian) woman appear more beautiful by publicly emulating an idealized domestic role for women in speeches and other propaganda. Following in her example and within the framework of this new role, women were to be the perfect wife and also, with the Nazi hyper-emphasis on fertility, have as many babies as possible to ensure the continuation of the German *Volk* (nation, people). An ultimate Nazi

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[41] Clifford Kirkpatrick, *Nazi Germany : Its Women and Family Life* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1938) pp. 117 and 319. Many women who were involved with the Nazi party did not commit crimes against humanity. Further, Clifford provided a contemporary overview of German women in the 1930s. See also Elizabeth Baer and Myrna Goldenberg. *Experience and Expression: Women, the Nazis, and the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), p. 278.

construction of femininity based in fertility became a way for women to take part in the construction of the new state.[42] Indeed, at a very early age, girls were "encouraged to prepare for motherhood and given practice in tasks befitting the woman's role in the *Volksgemeinschaft*" a role that Magda Goebbels perfectly emulated.[43] However, this imaging was by Nazi standards faulty in many respects; Magda had a Jewish stepfather, drank, smoked, and was divorced. Furthermore, she possessed "steely determination and inordinate ambition, characteristics that Nazi male officials preened themselves on, but would have strongly

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[42] Hundreds of warnings went out to women reminding them of their duty to the state as well as warning them of the consequences of marrying outside of the race, or, indeed, the country: "We must always attempt to persuade each German-blooded woman who is considering a relationship with a foreigner that her behavior is improper, inconsistent with the racial expectations of society. It must be clear that such behavior is a crime against the future of our people. Appropriate education will often prevent an undesirable marriage. As we have seen, current law does not prohibit the marriage of a German girl to a racially-unrelated foreigner. A marriage with a racially-related foreigner means the girl is lost to German ethnicity. In both cases, the marriage is more dangerous and less desirable that the marriage of a German man to a foreigner. Educating German women about this is urgently necessary. As a last resort, of course, there is the possibility of legal measures to combat racial threats to the German people. It is much better, however, to avoid letting it come to that, but rather lead each German girl to be aware of and proud of her German ethnicity." See: *Nachrichtendienst der Reichsfrauenführung Sonderdienst,* v. 10, # 16 (September 1941). https://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/rff-sonderdienst.htm (11 January 2018).

[43] Donald D. Wall, Nazi *Germany and World War II*, 2nd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 105.

discouraged the female sex from developing."[44] She also wore makeup, "while the general female public was being bombarded with placards and announcements that the German woman does not use makeup."[45] Magda later committed suicide after killing

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[44] Guenther, p. 132.

[45] Ibid., p. 131. Also, *The National Socialist Women's Yearbook of 1934* "reveals women without makeup, without jewelry, and with large hips were considered the ideal Aryan woman in Nazi Germany. The Chairwoman of the Association for German Women's Culture, Agnes Gerlach claimed the ideal woman had become the "big Germanic type of woman" instead of the France's "small, romantic type." Gerlach's article stated it was un-German to use products to change hair color or to change one's looks with cosmetics. The image of the thin French woman was emotionally damaging to German women in Gerlach's opinion. Similarly, the Jewish influence was thought to include too much focus on accessorizing and overly made-up women. According to Nazi propaganda, Jewish and French woman were not strong or able to bear as many children because they were petite. The German woman was superior and did not need to use these enhancing products to be beautiful. Nazis associated gaudiness with Jewish women and easy women because of tradition. Dressing plainly without make up or jewelry had been popular since the earliest Europeans. There were even periods where Europeans believed wearing make-up was immoral. Anglo-Saxons may have never worn make up; there is no evidence of them wearing make-up. Eventually cosmetics, dying hair, and wearing gaudy jewelry became associated with easy women. Nazis often stated the Western cultures had created an ugly and unnatural beauty. Women in Germany were beautiful naturally and did not need to look like the Western and Jewish's flawed idea of beauty. Nazis promoted women who were larger and who could bear children easier because this is the role the woman played in the Nazi culture. Agnes article demonstrates the opinions of the Nazis. The ideal German woman did not need to blend in with other women of the world. They were supposed to be the superior race; therefore, their women did not need doctoring to be beautiful and perfect." See Agnes Gerlach, *The National Socialist Women's Yearbook of 1934* (Germany: National Socialist Women's Organization, 1934), 1, found at https://alphahistory.com/nazigermany/women-in-nazi-germany/ (15 December 2018).

her six youngest children. In death, she sought to establish a personal memory, as devoted Nazi who sacrificed herself and her children because of her immortal love for Hitler.[46]

Veronika (Vera) Eichmann has been largely absent from the larger historical filmic narratives (most recently in the Netflix 2018 *Operation Finale* film) concerning her husband, the architect of the Final Solution, Adolf Eichmann. If portrayed at all, she seen as a maternalistic, devoted, overly romantic mother, so devoted and benign that when her family was in hiding in Argentina, she allegedly did not even think to change her or her children's names when applying for passports: "[she] walked into the German Embassy in the Argentine capital and applied for passports for her two older sons. She wrote in the applications that the young men

[46] Her youngest son, Ricardo, said this about his mother: "My mother kept all the newspaper cuttings about him under the sofa. I would creep under there and peek at them. I understood bits and pieces but not the whole picture. When I asked my mother, she would say, 'Lass das' -- 'leave it.' It was a taboo subject and stayed that way till my mother died two years ago. ... And it would have been better if [my mother] had talked to me. I wanted to challenge her, but I saw her inner turmoil. I loved her, and she loved my father. What was I supposed to do?" See Palash Ghosh, "Legacy of the Third Reich: Eichmann's Remorseful Son." *International Business Times*. https://www.ibtimes.com/legacy-third-reich-eichmanns-remorseful-son-1048816 (5 December 2018).

"might want to travel to Germany during vacations to visit relatives." The woman's name was Vera Eichmann. She presented the sons' birth certificates and her marriage certificate. The passports were issued."[47] Later, when Eichmann was captured and sentenced to death, she moved back to Germany with two of her four sons, living on assistance from relatives as Nazi widows were not entitled to any monies from the government. She remains a semi-unknown figure, whose memorialization was forever linked with her husband. An image of Vera reading a book titled *Adolf Eichmann* whilst awaiting his execution does not lend for any sympathy. This incredulous image portrays her somewhat resolute and forced. Was she really someone who needed to read a book about her husband to understand one of the 20th century's most notorious mass murderers? Or was this a false attempt to construct a memory of herself as an unwitting spouse?

[47] *Spiegel*, "The Long Road to Eichmann's Arrest: A Nazi War Criminal's Life in Argentina." http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/the-long-road-to-eichmann-s-arrest-a-nazi-war-criminal-s-life-in-argentina-a-754486.html (15 December 2018).

Vera's youngest son Ricardo, born in 1955, said that his mother never explained what his father did: "Ricardo also said that after his father's capture and execution, that "the family returned to Germany shortly after the trial began, and Eichmann said his mother, Veronika, never told him what his father did or how his father died."[48] Thus, she removed accountability and attempted to escape familial culpability by creating an amnesiac, or absent memory.[49] Vera remains one of the Nazi wives whose biography is still not fully flushed out. Is she deserving of future scholarly examination to better understand, how, if at all, she imaged herself as the wife of one of the most powerful men in Nazi Germany? Perhaps, as it then provides an avenue to explore what exactly *she knew*. Unlike Magda Goebbels and Lina Heydrich, little suggests that Vera Eichmann attempted to establish herself as another "bride of Hitler" as a self-designated "first lady of the Reich."

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[48] J. Correspondent. "Eichmann's son: There is no way I can explain deeds." *The Jewish News of Northern California*. June 9, 1995. https://www.jweekly.com/1995/06/09/eichmann-s-son-there-is-no-way-i-can-explain-deeds/ (29 November 2018).

[49] I refer the reader to Steven Ramirez, et al, "Creating a False Memory in the Hippocampus." *Science.* July 26, 2013. http://science.sciencemag.org/content/341/6144/387.full (11 January 2019).

In general, images of women in Nazi Germany typified an unrealistic quest for women to achieve a look that reflected "a Nordic priestess preaching the cult of womanhood" which later lent to how German women were portrayed post-war in a hypersexualized fashion.[50] If women did not meet this standard, they were subjected to disparaging remarks or verbal bullying by their peers. Post-war, the quest for what the ultimate Aryan woman should be constructed continues in a disturbing content. Thus, linking the images of high-status Nazi women to the "everyday" woman in Nazi Germany shows us that during the Third Reich, women competed as to who best represented the "refashion of its female citizenry," and entered an unspoken contest of sorts to embody what the ideal German woman was thought to look like.

[50] Guenther, p. 131.

# The Nazi Persecution of the LGBTQ communities

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

Persecution and policing of sexual and gender nonconformity did not begin with the Nazi regime, but intensified significantly after Hitler came to power in 1933. In Weimar Germany, LGBTQ nightlife and subcultures were visible in cities such as Berlin, where gay clubs, cabarets, and drag performances existed alongside ongoing police monitoring and periodic raids. Authorities also maintained records under Paragraph 175, although enforcement was inconsistent and varied over time and region.

After 1933, this existing surveillance infrastructure was absorbed into a centralized Nazi system of racial and moral policing. Spaces associated with LGBTQ life were shut down, organizations were banned, and police records were used more systematically to identify and arrest individuals. Gay men in particular were targeted under an expanded enforcement of Paragraph 175, resulting in thousands of arrests and imprisonment in concentration camps. Individuals labeled as sexually or gender

nonconforming were increasingly subjected to detention, surveillance, and state violence by the Nazis.

The Nazis viewed men as a more significant threat than women, arguing that women played a minor role in society. Further, in the Nazi view, even if a woman was a lesbian, as Gerdes (2015) revealed, the Nazis felt that the fertility of the lesbian community could be controlled by brutal force and sexual assaults, as mandated by the fierce belief in the Aryan reproductive construct.

As Gerdes (2015) suggests, in the Nazi framework of gender, the Nazis viewed men as more vital and necessary than women. Gay relations were already classified as a punishable offense; this was in Paragraph 175, which preceded the Nazis by several decades. Paragraph 175 "was the national German law that prohibited sex between men. It was incorporated into the German penal code in 1871," and this law allowed for the brutal persecution and incarceration of gay men that went on even before the Nazis came to power and was not revoked until decades after the Nazis were gone (Kaczorowski, 2015).

However, even though Paragraph 175 was in place before the Nazis came to power and were invoked during the Weimar Republic (1919-1933), there were LGBTQ nightclubs and cabarets. Germany was also where the critical and influential Magnus Hirschfeld's "*Institut für Sexualwissenschaft* [the Institute for Sexual Science], which contained thousands of books and journals on sexuality and gender," resided (Astrup Jensen, 2021). The Nazis would burn the Institute down, denouncing Hirschfeld and all research conducted there.

Therefore, there was a legal precedent in Paragraph 175 that was in place against gay men, and because in a hyper-masculinized regime like Nazi Germany, where men held power, gay men represented a dual-threat against Nazi masculine identity: they would not have sex with women and reproduce, which went against the Nazi heterosexual construct of the male agency.

**Gay Men**

Gay men were one of the primary targets of the Nazis. The LGBTQ community was overall considered asocial and immoral; anything related to gay identity, from clubs to organizations, was

destroyed by the Nazis. Gay men did not fit the Nazi ideal of racial purity or the Hitlerian goal of perpetuating the future "master" race. Gay men were not viewed as beneficial for reproductive purposes, as were lesbians, and were, therefore, a threat to the Nazi view of manhood. However, one man blurred the lines of sexuality and represented the Nazi construct of masculinity.

That man was Ernst Röhm, a World War One veteran, a friend of Hitler, and a leader of the *Sturmabteilung* (SA) [Stormtroopers, Brown Shirts], was gay and presented himself as a man who "attached paramount importance to the values of militarized masculinity" (Wills, 2019, para. 4). The Nazi construct of masculinity was the weapon against "the threatening "wave" of the bourgeoisie, women, Jews, socialists, Bolsheviks, all of whom represented weakness, chaos, and disorder" (Wills, 2019, para. 4). Röhm presented himself as the Nazi hypermasculinized ideal, and with his relationship with Hitler seemingly assured, he felt confident as the chief of staff of the *Sturmabteilung* (SA, the Brownshirts), even to the point where he opposed Paragraph 175.

> Röhm was Hitler's right-hand man as head of the *Sturmabteilung* (SA, the Brownshirts), the Nazi

> paramilitary wing. Instrumental in the rise of the party via the street-fighting and extra-judicial murders of the late 1920s and early 1930s, Röhm's sexual orientation was no secret after the mid-1920s. Hitler either ignored it or said it was immaterial, depending on who he was talking to, including other Nazis. (Wills, 2019)

Hitler already knew that Röhm was gay. So why act against him? Röhm was seen as a threat to Hitler's authority.

There was an alleged conspiracy that Röhm had a desire to merge the SA with the army; another threat came from Röhm himself, who was supposed to have said that the SA was the only legitimate body to fight the communists. Hitler moved against Röhm because he was a political threat; any threat against Hitler had to be dealt with immediately. Röhm, who did not approve of some of Hitler's policies, began to criticize other top Nazis and spread rumours openly.

Simkin (2016) stated that Röhm alleged that Joseph Goebbels, the *Reichsminister für Propaganda* [Reich Minister for Propaganda] was interested in his wife Magda Goebbels's son from her first marriage in a sexual way. Goebbels hated Röhm and advised Hitler that Röhm had to go. Hermann Göring,

*Reichsmarshall des Großdeutschen Reiches* [Marshal of the Empire] and the second most powerful Nazi after Hitler, and Heinrich Himmler, the *Reichsführer of the Schutzstaffel* [Protection Squadron, SS], were united against Röhm. Both were concerned that the SA, who, Simkin (2016) noted, had a membership of over four million men, whose allegiance was with Röhm.

As Simkin (2016) pointed out, Göring and others made a list of those in the regime, all of whom had to be eliminated. Göring especially denounced Röhm and hated gay men; thus, Röhm was at the top of the list. Evidence against Röhm grew, especially when Röhm said that "Adolf is a swine… He only associates with the reactionaries now. His old friends aren't good enough for him. Getting matey with the East Prussian generals. They're his cronies now. Are we revolutionaries, or aren't we?" (Simkin, 2016, para. 56). Therefore, for Hitler's political gains, Röhm had to go, and the only way to deal with this famous figure was to discredit gay men and denounce Röhm's sexuality as immoral, asocial and place gay men on the list of threats against the Nazi world order.

In 1934, the president of Germany, Paul von Hindenburg, was ill, and Hitler was convinced it was important that he be seen as von Hindenburg's rightful and only heir. Thus, when it was evident in the summer of 1934 that von Hindenburg had weeks to live, Hitler and his intimates decided it was necessary to consolidate power and secure Hitler's position.

The plan was to now use Röhm's sexuality against him in what Hitler referred to as a morality campaign against gay men. Evans (2005) revealed that on trumped-up charges of corruption, Röhm was arrested in the early hours of 30 June 1934, with Hitler present at his arrest: "Hitler entered Röhm's bedroom alone with a whip in his hand. Behind him were two detectives with pistols at the ready. He spat out the words; Röhm, you are under arrest" (Simkin, 2016, para. 97). Although Hitler did not want Röhm to die, he was convinced there was no other way Röhm could be allowed to live. Röhm was murdered in his jail cell on 1 July 1934. His close friends and their partners were then murdered under Hitler's direct orders.

As Evans (2005) noted, Hitler continued to publicly weaponize Röhm's sexual orientation as a reason to remove him from power. Evans (2005) elaborated that Hitler denounced what he referred to as anyone considered asocial, and attacks against gay men increased.

As the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has recorded, "Between 1933 and 1945, an estimated 100,000 men were arrested for violating Nazi Germany's laws" that were against gay men, "and of these, approximately 50,000 were sentenced to prison." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2019b). On the 28th of June 1935, the Nazis amended Paragraph 175 to allow for broader persecution of gay men.

The Nazi Amendment to Paragraph 175 is as follows:

> The German Ministry of Justice revises Paragraphs 175 and 175a of the German criminal code with the intent of 1) expanding the range of criminal offenses to encompass any contact between men, either physical or in form of word or gesture, that could be construed as sexual; and 2) strengthening penalties for all violations of the revised law. The revision facilitates the systematic persecution of gay men and provides police with broader means for prosecuting them. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2019b)

Within the camp system, after 1937, prisoners were identified by a badge or symbol. Gay men were marked with a pink triangle, as seen here in this 1938 image:

The men in the image were imprisoned in Sachsenhausen and were wearing the pink triangle badge. The image is in the public domain and made possible through the National Archives and Records Administration.

Throughout the Holocaust, gay men were subject to brutal mistreatment, torture, abuse, and medical experimentations. Few survived; the death rate of gay men in the Holocaust has been "estimated to be as high as 60 percent-among the highest of non-Jewish prisoners. By 1945, with the end of World War II and the dissolution of the Nazi government, only about 4,000 gay prisoners in the camps had survived" (Kaczorowski, 2015). As Kaczorowski (2015) proved, reparations for gay men were not acknowledged

after the war, and only in the late twentieth century did conversations begin to recognize gay men as victims of the Nazis formally. Kaczorowski (2015) noted that "In May 2002, the German parliament completed legislation to pardon all gays convicted under Paragraph 175 during the Nazi era." The Nazis also targeted lesbians. Although their gender as viewed through a Nazi lens lent a difference to how the Nazis perceived their sexuality.

**Lesbians**

Lesbians were also the targets of the Nazis, but as Gerdes (2015) discovered, "when the Nazis considered expanding Paragraph 175 in 1935, to include same-sex acts between women, the discussions were halted on the basis that women played a relatively minor role in public life" (Gerdes, 2015). Therefore, there are gender implications here that include biological orientation. Because the Nazis viewed women as inferior to men, and since the "*Reichsminister* of Justice also concluded lesbian acts could not be clearly determined given women's generally more intimate public contact" (Gerdes, 2015). The Nazis viewed

women as fertility vessels and believed all women could be used for reproductive purposes. Gerdes (2015) argued that this marginalization saved lesbians since the Nazis saw their sexuality as curable, intending to preserve women for reproductive purposes.

Scholars have further suggested that the "image of the German mother and wife is what likely saved the majority of German lesbians from being arrested and detained in one of the concentration camps: their sexuality was seen as 'fixable' by the Nazis" (Gerdes, 2015). However, due to mistreatment within the camp structure, as Gerdes (2015) elaborated, lesbians had a short lifespan and were subjected to barbaric sexual abuse and torture. Nevertheless, why were lesbians not as much of a threat as gay men were?

What can be ascertained about the differences comes directly from the *Reichminister's* view, where he made a case for the Nazi viewpoint that "women's marginal role in public offices would not allow them to falsify or bastardize public life like gay men" (Gerdes, 2015). Lesbianism was not criminalized, and instead of pink triangles, lesbians wore a "green badge,

denouncing them as *Berufsverbrecher* [established or 'career' criminals] or the black triangle, the 'asocial' badge, also worn by Romani and homeless people" (Gerdes, 2015). Lesbians were also forced into brothels, where they were subjected to horrific acts of gendercide. More research is needed into this area of Holocaust studies, where for decades, women's experiences were often excluded from general scholarships. Historians such as Rochelle Saidel and others have worked tirelessly on narratives from marginalized survivors and victims of the Nazis.

Concerning the LGBTQ experience during the Holocaust, scholarship is not as inclusive as it must be. Much more research and scholarship are needed. For LGBTQ survivors, many hid their trauma; as government-sanctioned persecution went on, hate crimes rose and today are still on the increase. Therefore, we can conclude that as Astrup Jensen (2021) stated, "due to limited research funding, the high death rate of gay men in the camps that these victims are often forgotten by the world." Further, as Astrup Jensen (2021) noted, with more inclusive scholarship, opening up the stories of other non-Jewish victims of the Nazis will help

expand our understanding of how the Nazis targeted the LGBTQ community. New scholarship has emerged – and is still ongoing – examining Nazism and members of the Trans community.

**Members of the Trans Community**

Trans folx were also persecuted by the Nazis, and their stories have largely not been included in scholarship until recently, as Zavier Nunn has noted, stating "How the Nazi state policed trans people is yet to be acknowledged by historians. Thus far, trans people have been subsumed into histories of queer persecution." (Nunn, 2023, p. 123) Nunn related that during the Weimar Republic (1919-1933) that a distinct, "nascent, state-recognized trans identity constructed through medical, legal and cultural mediums" emerged, along with the "world's first trans magazine (*Das 3. Geschlecht*)" and more, including "*Transvestitenschein* (transvestite certification) and legal name changes, forms of state-legitimated trans recognition. Dr Magnus Hirschfeld's *Institut für Sexualwissenschaft* (Institute for Sexual Science) opened in 1919, offering, among other sexual health

services, some of the world's first medical transition" (Nunn, 2023, pp. 124-125).

Hirschfeld's institute was destroyed by the Nazis in 1933, along with the majority of the institute's research. However, as Nunn revealed, some documents did survive, along with stories of trans people who were persecuted by the Nazis, experimented on, tortured, and murdered. Nunn carefully explained that even though there were some rights afforded to members of the trans community before the Nazis came to power on 30 January 1933, that it did not mean that there was no persecution, ostracization, medical experimentation, and "lavender" relationships to provide some form of legal or otherwise legitimacy (Nunn, 2023, pp. 124-125).

Looking at surviving accounts and testimonies of queer and trans folx has allowed for a new area of scholarship to emerge examining how members of the trans community were viewed by the Nazis, how they became victims, and, in some cases, how they survived. Much more research is needed in the area of trans folx and Nazism, as Nunn reminds the reader in their groundbreaking

article, “Trans Liminality and the Nazi State.” As historians continue uncovering new evidence, the historical record has increasingly recognized that members of the trans community were also persecuted under the Nazi regime, despite decades of limited scholarship on the subject (Marhoefer 2023). This growing body of research has also sparked contemporary public and legal debates. In 2022, a German court ruled that biologist Marie-Luise Vollbrecht’s tweet disputing claims about transgender victims under Nazism could reasonably be interpreted as denying Nazi crimes, despite her subsequent clarification (Tagesspiegel 2022).

**Queer and Bisexual Experiences**

While the categories of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (an important note here is that queer may not have been the identity language most people under Nazism would have used for themselves) are useful frameworks for understanding LGBTQ histories today, these categories do not always reflect how people identified themselves or how they were understood and categorized by the Nazi state. Historical evidence for bisexual and queer experiences under Nazism is more limited, in part because Nazi

persecution often operated through specific legal, racial, gender, and social categories rather than contemporary identity labels. The histories discussed in this chapter also reveal the limitations of the archive itself. While historians have increasingly recovered the experiences of gay men, lesbians, and transgender people under Nazism, many bisexual and other queer experiences remain more difficult to trace. This absence does not necessarily indicate that these experiences did not exist; rather, it reflects how Nazi categories of persecution and postwar systems of recognition shaped which stories were preserved and remembered (Marhoefer 2015).

**Recognition and more research is needed**

The controversy surrounding Vollbrecht's statement also reflects a much longer history of struggle over who is recognized as a victim of Nazi persecution and who is included in Holocaust memory. For many decades after the war, gay men were excluded from Holocaust remembrance and reparations due to continuing homophobia and the postwar enforcement of Paragraph 175, which criminalized sexual acts between men in both East and West

Germany. Paragraph 175 remained in effect in East Germany until 1968 and in West Germany until 1969, and it was not fully repealed in reunified Germany until March 10, 1994. Although the repeal of Paragraph 175 marked an important legal shift, Germany's formal recognition and efforts to address the consequences of Paragraph 175 persecution developed over time. In 2002, Germany overturned Nazi-era convictions under Paragraph 175, marking an important step toward recognizing men who had been persecuted through this legal system during and after the Nazi period (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum 2019b).

However, recognition and reparations for LGBTQ victims have remained uneven. Lesbians, bisexual people, and members of the trans community have often been overlooked in Holocaust memory and compensation discussions because their experiences of persecution were not always documented through the same legal frameworks used against gay men, leaving many survivors and victims outside official narratives of recognition (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum 2019a). Therefore, there remains an

avenue that demands more research into the LGBTQ experiences in the Holocaust.

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**William Arondeus and his legacy of courage**

*Adam Yunis*

During the Nazi occupation of Western Europe, resistance movements in every country fought a clandestine war against the occupiers. The nature of this war meant that individuals who actively resisted faced constant threats of death or torture by the Nazis if they were captured. This essay will highlight the role two gay men played in these movements and discuss the motivating factors for gay men who put themselves in danger to oppose the Nazis. As Adelé-Marie pointed out, further study is needed on the role of LGBTQ individuals who were persecuted and those who actively resisted the Nazis. The legacy of courage left by these men is crucial to remember when discussing different forms of resistance.

Nazi Germany was a mix of reactionary and revolutionary politics, which means its revolutionary policies sought to transform society, but often these policies were reactions to liberal or left-wing beliefs. The Weimar government of the 1920s was one of the most liberal social regimes of the time; this included gay rights and

the study of sexuality. The Nazi persecution of gay men was a part of their "social cleansing" policies to eliminate gay men/ Jewish/ Communist/ influence in society that they believed was represented by the Weimar regime. By the 1930s, the very public actions of the Nazis in their book burnings, racial policies, persecution of Jews, and hatred for modern art made it clear to gay men and artistic communities that the Nazis were a threat.

The social policies of Nazi Germany in occupied Western Europe included cultural censorship and a return to "Classical Art." The artistic communities of the major European cities were thriving during the 20s and 30s, and the Nazi invasion of Western Europe brought this to an end. In the Netherlands, the Nazi occupation cultural committee was imposed by the *Kulturkammer*, which issued edicts on who could work in the arts and what could be produced. It is in this context that the story of William Arondeus' resistance begins.

William Arondeus was born in 1894 to a large family, the youngest son of an Amsterdam fuel trader. At the age of 17, declaring his intention to become an artist and the fact that he was

a gay man, he fought with his parents and left home, beginning a career as a painter and later a writer. He authored and illustrated several short stories and books but led a modest life among the Amsterdam artistic circle. After the Nazi invasion, Arondeus believed it was his duty to resist and encouraged others to help in any way they can. In the spring of 1942, he founded *Brandarisbrief*, an illegal periodical in which he expressed his opposition to the occupying forces, their anti-Jewish actions, and the *Kulturkammer*.

Dutch artists Gerrit van der Veen and composer, Jan van Gilse had been publishing a similar underground resistance paper, the *De Vrije Kunsteenaar* [The Free Artist], and in 1943, the two papers merged, and Arondeus became friends with van der Veen and his small band of resistance members in Amsterdam. Van der Veen was a specialist in forging documents for Jews and began the activity shortly after refusing to declare himself an Aryan during the first months of Nazi rule. After the merger, Arondeus began forging documents and using his artistic skills to produce quality forgeries rapidly. Frieda Belinfante, a Dutch cellist, conductor, and

lesbian, was also a member of this resistance group and forged documents alongside Arondeus. They became great friends.

There was one major problem with producing forged documents in Amsterdam during this time, the Municipal Office for Population Registration in the city centers meant that a resident's data could be checked, so forged cards could be easily detected. Precise record-keeping by the Dutch was one of many reasons that 102,000 of the 140,000 Dutch Jews were murdered in the Holocaust. The existence of this bureau posed an obstacle to rescuing Jews. Arondeus and van der Veen saw only one solution. Guards were consistently placed at strategic points all around the Amsterdam office, as a similar attack had occurred late in 1942. Knowing they would be on high alert for an attack, the resistance group would use this to their advantage. On March 27, 1943, Willem, dressed in an officer's uniform made from scratch alongside his lieutenant (van der Veen), four "policeman" and three more "officers" greeted the guards, stating they were there to search for bombs. Arondeus had pulled off his most significant artistic performance. The guards believed the story, and the group

walked in with several pounds of explosives, ready to destroy the building. Two medical students among the group sedated the guards with phenobarbital and dragged them from the building. The attack went as planned, with fire and explosives destroying much of the building; 800,000 identify cards were destroyed, and 600 blank cards and 50,000 guilders were removed from the building.

The group who carried out the attack all got away initially, but the head of police in the German occupation administration was infuriated and offered vast sums of money for information on the group. In early April, Willem was captured, and later 13 other members of the group were arrested. Willem was found guilty and sentenced to death on June 18, 1943.

Lau Mazirel, a lawyer, and Dutch resistance member who would later become one of the first activist attorneys for LGBTQ rights, visited Willem in prison shortly before his execution. He asked her to “tell the world that gays are no less courageous than anyone else” (Legacy Chicago, 2021).

Arondeus was murdered on July 1, 1943, along with 12 other members of the resistance captured after the attack. In 1986, Yad Vashem honored Willem and the planners and participants of the attack as Righteous Among the Nations.

Frieda Belinfante survived the war, moved to the U.S., and was the founding artistic director and conductor of the Orange County Philharmonic.

Lau Marizel would become a lawyer for the COC Nederland, founded in 1946, the oldest LGBT rights group in the world, still operating today.

Willem Arondeus's courage and character were something he had his whole life, but his words can give us some insight into why some gay men sought out dangerous positions during the war. For gay men growing up in the early 20th century, they were constantly reminded that being gay was associated with a lack of courage and forced to think that there was something medically wrong with them. Resistance movements in Western Europe provided opportunities for gay men to fight back against the Nazis in any way they could, as distinctions such as someone's sexuality

was not a concern to these groups. Another example of this sentiment can be found in Denis Rake, whose interviews are luckily preserved in Marcel Ophuls' masterpiece on the occupation of France, *The Sorrow and the Pity.*

Denis Rake was a British agent whose war records are filled with talks of his bravery, character, and sense of duty. He operated for most of the war in the underground with the resistance movements in France. Born in 1901 in England, Rake was older than most men serving in the SOE-the special operations executive. Rake led an exciting life before the war, starring in musicals and touring Europe. He stated that he wanted to be in the underground due to his anxiety about being gay. Rake also said that he wanted to prove to himself that he was as courageous as others. As Marcel Ophuls points out in the interview, he was affected by the prejudice of others that he had internalized, constantly volunteering for dangerous missions. His theater background, mastery of French, and his determination to act with courage made him an outstanding agent.

During the war, thousands of gay men fought to defeat the Nazis, and we will never know the precise number. Studying the backgrounds of resistance members and rescuers during the Holocaust is an essential task for future scholars. You will find that many resistance fighters and rescuers during the Holocaust often had a history of helping social causes or came from groups that faced persecution themselves. A valuable lesson, and I encourage the next generation of scholars to be active in scholarship and their communities, as you never know when a moment of steadfast resistance to injustice will present itself.

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# Irma Grese: "The Beautiful Beast"

*Michael Vyborny*

> *„No one who did not see her during her cruel acts, could not believe that such a beautiful creature is capable of torturing others with such a sadism and hate."* - Erich Schön, 1945

Irma Grese is one of the most well known and most despised female guards who worked in the Nazi concentration camps during World War II. She had served in three notorious camps: Ravensbrück, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Bergen-Belsen and she held the distinction of being one of the youngest women to work on behalf of the SS. Because of her startling beauty, her youth, and enraged cruelty against concentration camp victims, Irma Grese became the center of attention at her postwar trial. There had been so much publicity about her in newspapers, magazines, and other periodicals around the world that she became better known than many of Hitler's notorious henchmen.

Many simply could not believe that such a pretty, young blonde girl with an innocent face could be capable of committing the crimes that she had been indicted for by the British. Grese is

remembered by many survivors as to just how calloused and brutal a human being could be. Even after many years, the memory of Grese would still conjure up horrendous flashbacks of her sadistic acts against defenseless people. Sadly, there is no way one can count just how many deaths she was responsible for, but it had to have been thousands, especially during the May 1944 mass selections of the Hungarians Jews who flooded into Auschwitz-Birkenau.

The childhood and early life of Irma Grese is well documented in several published accounts; as a result, my study will only examine the basic facts of her childhood years and place more emphasis on her time in the camps.

Irma Grese was born on October 7, 1923, in a small German village of Wrechen, approximately forty kilometers from Neustrelitz. Her parents were worked as managers of an estate and Irma was one of five children-she had two brothers and two sisters. Irma Grese's mother committed suicide by ingesting a cleaning agent that contained hydrogen chloride in January 1936. Grese was only twelve at that time and it must have had an effect on her

because she discovered her mother as she began to die from this horrific method of killing herself (Brown, 2004, p. 11, 13-14).

The people from Wrechen never spoke about her much after the war because the small village is mainly known for the birthplace of the most notorious female guard and the residents were, of course, not proud of it. Also, Wrechen was located in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), or "East Germany," and one had to shed any connection to Nazism for self-preservation.

As many young German children, Irma Grese was fascinated with Nazi ideology, its symbolism, and exuberance. With her sister, she joined the organization *Bund Deutscher Mädel* ("League of German Girls"), which was the female version of the male *Hitlerjugend* ("Hitler Youth") Nazi organization. Their father did not want them to join the group, but the two sisters joined it even with their father´s opposition.

Irma Grese attended primary school for eight years and, in 1938, at the age of fourteen, she left school. Some sources say that she was bullied and did not see a reason for going to school

anymore. (Prima ZOOM, 2020). She worked at the Fürstenberg dairy factory and then as a sales assistant in a small shop in nearby Lychen, Germany. From 1939 until 1941, she served as an assistant nurse at the SS sanatorium in Hohenlychen. She worked under the head of the hospital, Karl Gebhardt, who later performed horrific experiments on women in the female concentration camp, Ravensbrück. Grese tried to become a nurse, but it did not work out. Failing at that, she applied for the women´s SS service and volunteered to train for a position as an *Aufseherin* ("supervisor") in Ravensbrück (Brown, 2004, p. 17, 19, 23-27 and *Gedenkstätte*, 2004).

**Ravensbrück 1942-1943**

Irma Grese's application was accepted by the Nazi authorities and she enrolled in the female guards' training program at Ravensbrück in July 1942. She completed the course and became *Aufseherin.* Because she was one of the youngest female guards, her pay salary was 54 *Reichsmarks* a month, which was much less than the salary of her colleagues received. (Brown, 2004, p. 38 and 40-41).

Apart from being the biggest concentration camp for women, Ravensbrück was also a training center for the new female guards. Between 1939 and 1945 more than 1,000 male SS guards and over 3 000 female guards served in the camp and its subcamps. The first commandant was *SS Hauptsturmführer* Max Koegel. He was succeeded in the summer of 1942 by *SS Hauptsturmführer* Fritz Suhren. The replacement of the commandant was the time when Grese began serving in Ravensbrück (Beßmann & Eschebach, 2013, p. 167, 173-174). In July 1942, the chief guard (*Oberaufseherin*) was Maria Mandl.

Because the chief female guard was also responsible for the training program of the new female guards, it is possible that Mandl herself was in charge of Grese´s training. Grese with other *Aufseherinnen* learned their regulations and were taught how to oversee the prisoners as well as how to punish and beat them. It was then when Grese was instructed in the finer points of cruelty and callousness toward her prisoners. Indeed, it was well known that these young women changed dramatically after completing their training program (Hájková, 1963, p. 32, 288).

Grese finished her training after about three weeks and then was assigned to oversee several work details. She oversaw prisoners the laundry detail as well as the Opitz Nursery and Gardening operation. During her leave, Irma Grese returned to visit her family in Wrechen for the last time. She came home wearing her uniform to impress her family with her position in the female guard unit. It was during this visit that a fight between her and her father ensued and Grese never returned home again (Brown, 2004, p. 37-40).

**Auschwitz-Birkenau 1943-1945**

In March 1943, Irma Grese was deployed to Auschwitz-Birkenau. At first, she worked as a telephone operator in the office of a *Blockführer* (Brown, 2004, p. 43). After that she supervised several female details for about a year. As former prisoner Erich Kulka noted in his account, “She was in Birkenau for a long time and had lots of different duties.” (Kraus & Kulka, 1964, p. 242).

In addition, Grese supervised a women’s detail that built roads., Then, for some infraction of camp regulations, she was assigned to monitor a punishment detail where prisoners worked in

the worst conditions and where the death rate was the greatest in the whole camp. Following this, Grese was given a gardening detail in Rajsko, one of the subcamps of Birkenau (Cywiński et al., 2017, p.77). She also oversaw a detail that picked herbs for the camp hospital. This particular detail was set up with the agreement of SS Dr. Werner Rhode. After nearly three months of operation, this particular detail was cancelled (*Zeszyty Oświecimskie* 24, 2006, p. 65).

Irma Grese developed a reputation for excessive cruelty while overseeing all of these different work details. She would often release her dog on the defenseless prisoners under her command, especially on those details that took place outside the camp complex (Brown, 2004, p. 52). Her cruelty was soon known throughout Auschwitz-Birkenau. During 1943, Grese served as the block, or barracks, leader (*Blockführerin)* of various barracks of the women´s camp in Birkenau. For a time, she oversaw the packages section where female prisoners sorted parcels that had been sent by the prisoners' friends and relatives. Grese helped herself to some of the packages and also delighted in making

inmates wait for their packages during rollcalls in frigid weather. In December 1943, she worked in the postal department where she censored the prisoner´s letters (Posmysz & Wójcik, 2017, p. 395; Brown, 2004, p. 44; and Cywiński et al., 2017, p. 77).

**Promotion in 1944**

The most important time for Grese came in May 1944 when Auschwitz-Birkenau was awaiting mass transports from Hungary. At this time, she became directly involved with the selections of the Hungarian Jews, which was the biggest killing action in the history of Auschwitz. She was promoted to be the *Lagerführerin* (camp leader) of the new camp, BIIc, also known as *C Lager* (Camp C), which contained approximately 30,000 Hungarian female Jews. However, it must be pointed out that Grese had not become the chief guard of the whole Women´s Birkenau camp, but only of the "C" component. By the summer of 1944, BIIc had been reduced to roughly 20,000 young women mainly from Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland (Expressen, 1945 and Smoleń, 1972, p. 106).

Due to the Soviet advance, the prisoners were awaiting transports to other camps in the West. By this time, there was a shortage of the already meager rations and the hygienic conditions had deteriorated (Smoleń, 1972, p. 105-106). Grese was bears some of the responsibility for the inhuman conditions in her area of the camp and the poor inmates under her charge had to bear the consequences of her calloused behavior. Due to her elevated position within the women's camp, Irma Grese would become known as one of the most ruthless and brutal of all the camp guards.

Most of the prisoners got to know firsthand about Irma Grese's cruelty during the daily and dreaded roll calls. She would usually arrive at the roll calls by bicycle, and she would gleefully whistle while the nearly 20,000-30,000 inmates had already been standing a couple of hours on their feet, in formation, in front of their blocks, waiting for her arrival, regardless of what it was like outside (Expressen, 1945). The prisoners who saw her for the very first time could not believe that such a beautiful blonde woman

with an angelic face could be cruel. They had no idea what they were about to experience.

As other SS guards arrived at the roll call to commence the prisoner count, Grese stood out: she would generally wear well-tailored greenish grey culottes, usually with a white blouse or a light blue shirt, her blonde hair pulled up into a bun, her SS hat curtly placed atop her hair, and she had on black high boots that were highly polished (Hegedüs, 2014, p. 50-51; Expressen, 1945; and Lengyelová, 2018, p. 263). She also carried a silver pistol in her holster (Moskovits, 1993, p. 172). During the count, Grese would whip individual prisoners for the smallest movement with her infamous whip that was fashioned from brown-red leather. Grese always carried her whip inside one of her boots (Schön & Kraus, 1945, p. 87 and Lengyelová, 2018, p. 263). Grese hit the prisoners with such powerful blows that they would fall to the ground instantaneously. One survivor from Slovakia described how Grese once broke an arm of a woman who did not want to kneel as a punishment for religious reasons (USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive, Interview with Livia

Vogelmann). She was also capable of kicking or beating inmates to death if they fell out due to weakness or if they were not able to stand up straight. Often her beatings were simply wanton acts of brutality for which the victim was simply close enough for Grese to attack. Finally, Grese never hit the inmates without her hands in gloves (Expressen, 1945).

Grese would very often make the whole camp stand for hours at a time. Sometimes she ordered the prisoners to stand in place completely naked. The prisoners were not allowed to leave the formation until she gave the order to disperse (Expressen, 1945). Because of these conditions, some prisoners fainted then Grese trampled on them and/or set her big German shepherd on them (Erlichman, 2000, p. 36). She was known for punishing individual prisoners, blocks or even the whole camp with long hours of kneeling and sometimes the prisoners were forced to hold bricks above their heads (Cywiński et al., 2017, p. 77 and Expressen, 1945).

**Selections**

During the roll calls, Grese and some other guards selected individual prisoners for direct transport to the gas chambers. Many prisoners mentioned that they witnessed Irma Grese and Dr. Josef Mengele conducting these selections the more than others. Her mere presence struck feared in the prisoners and a few even became hysterical when they saw her approaching. Again, due to her striking physical features, immaculate dress, flawless complexion, and relentless brutality, her image was etched in the memory of those who survived.

There were terrible scenes that occurred during the macabre selection process. Grese would often join a few of the other SS guards and Dr. Mengele. She would then conduct a "parade," a procedure in which prisoners would pass in front of her. She picked whoever she found desired. Once she picked the most emaciated women, but the next time, she would those who had skin rash (Expressen, 1945). She shot at prisoners who tried to escape their selection to be transported to the gas chambers (Brown, 2004, p. 80). She would even whip the prisoners chosen. During the selections she would not show any mercy and calmly

send thousands of women to their deaths (Lengyelová, 2018, p. 170, 264). She purposefully tore relatives apart who attempted to go together on a work detail (Brown, 2004, p. 53)

**Acts of Kindness**

Although Grese was known for her brutal acts, it must be noted that there were occasions in which she behaved much differently; indeed, she even acted with kindness. During some selections, she would save some of the prisoners. For example, this happened when she saved a woman on sixteen separate occasions from a selection overseen by Dr. Mengele (Camurati, 2017). Grese was able also to help in some way the prisoners who worked for her and she arranged their meeting with their relatives in the camp (Schnurmacher. 2019, p. 152). She picked the prisoners whom she wanted for personal assistance. An excellent seamstress from Munkács, Hungary, personally sewed uniforms for her while a different seamstress from Budapest attended to other clothing Grese wanted to add to her wardrobe (Hegedüs, 2014, p. 51 and Lengyelová, 2018, p. 263, 269).

When Grese was on duty at Bergen-Belsen, she once caught young girls picking up potatoes which they found and let them go without any punishment or beating (Verolme, 2016, p. 217-218). She took a liking to some prisoners too. This happened to a Polish prisoner named Nina Kaleska. Grese made her work for her and she gave her extra rations from her private food supply (Miller, 2000, p. 36).

Finally, Irma Grese had a friendly relationship with *Lagerälteste* (Head prisoner of compound BIIc), Magda (nee Hellinger) Blau. However, as Mrs. Blau later said, “She could talk to me like a friend; and the next minute she was a devil” (Miller, 2000, p. 139).

**The Daily Hunt for Victims**

Apart from roll calls and selections, Irma Grese had authority over the administration of her camp. She seemed to be ubiquitous. She seemingly could appear anywhere, at any time, and she took great satisfaction when she saw prisoners were quickly evading her. She spied on the starving prisoners who were trying to get some food by the camp kitchen and then she would take delight

in brutally punishing them on the spot or she would shoot them outright (Perl & Preston 2017, p. 140 and Schnurmacher, 2019, p. 152). She was active in the camp during curfew lockdown when prisoners were supposed to be in their blocks. If she located someone not in her designated place, Grese would give the offender a thrashing (Expressen, 1945).

Survivor of Lager C, Isabella Leitner wrote: "You´d rather go to the crematorium than get into her hands" (Leitner& Leitner, 1994, p. 228). However, Grese was not alone in her enjoyment of inflicting pain on violators. Other female wardens in the Auschwitz-Birkenau retinue took part in these daily acts of Schadenfreude, making the prisoners' lives miserable. These notorious female overseers included the *Rapportführerin* Margot Drechsel, Luise Brunner and Elisabeth Hasse (Hegedüs, 2014, p. 50).

**The Most Beautiful Women Prisoners**

Grese was known for her perverse inclinations (Schön & Kraus, 1945, p. 87). She specifically picked out and sexually abused attractive and/or well-endowed young Jewish girls. Grese

was relentless in hunting down those who did not want to have anything with her or were seen purposefully evading her (Kraus & Kulka, 1964, p. 126). She would usually dispatch the female prisoners she had raped to the crematorium. (Lengyelová, 2018, p. 314). On one occasion, Irma Grese made another prisoner stand as a guard in front of a barracks where she was raping other Jewish girls (Miller, 2000, p. 36). She focused on the pretty women in other ways than sexually. At times, she would walk around the camp and beat them on their breasts with her whip (Langbein, 2004, p. 400). She would take pretty girls, throw them on the ground, beat them until they were bleeding and then send them to the crematorium (USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive, Interview with Relly Geller).

Grese sent a large number of prisoners to their deaths every day in this manner and she did so completely on her own. Because her beauty, Grese had numerous lovers in the Birkenau camp. There were rumors that at one time she was the girlfriend of Dr. Josef Mengele, because she joined him very often. But the most important affair she had was with an enlisted SS guard named

Franz Wolfgang Hatzinger, who later died of typhus in the Bergen-Belsen camp (Lengyelová, 2018, p. 263; Brown, 2004, p. 64).

**Liquidation of Lager C and Her Promotion to *Rapportführerin***

Grese and Dr. Mengele led the final selection in compound BIIc (Perl with Preston 2017: 178-187). In December 1944, after the liquidation, the remaining strong prisoners were sent on transports to other camps as slave laborers and the sick prisoners were dispatched to the gas chambers, Grese was promoted to *Rapportführerin* in the main women´s camp of Birkenau (Cywiński et al., 2017, p. 77). The rank of *Rapportführerin* was the second highest rank for a female guard and it entailed Grese being responsible for the daily roll call parades, disciplinary investigation, and oversight of punishments (Ian Baxter, personal communication, December 11, 2020).

When the evacuation of Auschwitz began, Grese guarded one of the last transports sent from the Auschwitz-Birkenau complex to Ravensbrück. Other female guards from Auschwitz also assigned to the same transport bound for Ravensbrück. She was there only for a couple of weeks before being sent to Bergen-

Belsen camp in March 1945 (*Mahn-und Gedenkstatte* Ravensbrück, 2004).

**Bergen-Belsen**

Grese arrived in Bergen-Belsen with a huge prisoner transport in March 1945 and this time she was appointed as *Arbeitsdienstführerin* (the work service leader, who was responsible for assigning prisoners to their work details as well as overseeing the prisoners' labor). She also was given the duty of being a *Rapportführein*. Irma Grese was only at Bergen-Belsen for three and a half weeks and, even as the war was rapidly coming to a close, she continued her brutal treatment of the prisoners (Brown, 2004, p. 63, 65). Indeed, Grese did not relinquish her favorite activity-beating women on the face until they fell to the ground. The prisoners who knew Grese at Auschwitz could see that there had been some physical changes taking place with her physical appearance. For one thing, she seemed to be pale. As in Auschwitz-Birkenau, Irma Grese was attired in her work uniform and wore a cap with a peak (Expressen, 1945).

Grese did not attempt to improve the terrible conditions which existed in the camp and she seemed content to let thousands of prisoners to die of hunger (RFU, 2019). As the camp *Arbeitsdienstführerin,* it was her job to monitor the daily prisoners march to work and their return to the camp compound. She also supervised new transports that came into the camp. (Ian Baxter, personal communication, December 11, 2020) She had an office near the women´s camp gate (Verolme, 2016, p. 217-218). Since there were many children brought to Belsen with their mothers, Grese often visited them and tormented the young inmates psychologically.

Survivor Barry Spanjaard, who was a young boy when he was imprisoned in Belsen, described in his memoir how Grese often purposely stood in front of the starving inmates while eating cheese or a sandwich (Spanjaard, 1982, p. 147-148). I was lucky enough to get in contact with few survivors from Bergen-Belsen who saw Grese there. One of them Mr. Maurice Blik from the New Netherlands had a similar experience like Spanjaard and told me about one visit of Grese into their barracks with her dog while

enjoying eating an apple in front of the prisoners. He noted that all the while she had a smile on her face (Maurice Blik, personal communication, February 29, 2020). Mr. Tomi Reichental from Slovakia told me about Grese´s visit to the children´s barracks with her whip. He also told me that there were rumors that when Grese caught inmates trying to communicate through separate sections of Belsen camp, she beat them (Reichental, personal communication, December 16, 2018; January 9, 2019). Mr. Ivan Lefkovits from Slovakia was one of the children of Belsen and he remembered seeing Grese with her whip in the street. His mother warned him not to make eye contact with her because they learned from other inmates that even an eye contact could make her use her whip (Lefkovits, personal communication, February 5, 2019).

While watching the prisoner marches, Grese inspected them as they returned from work. She once attacked a Czech prisoner whom she found a knife hiding in her socks. The prisoner was Zdenka Fantl who shared her testimony with me. Fantl confirmed Grese was wearing a working uniform, a jacket and a cap with peak. She continued by saying that Grese “gave orders

not only to the prisoners but also other female guards and had huge power over everybody in the Belsen camp" (Zdenka Fantl, personal communication, December 7-8, 2018). As in Auschwitz-Birkenau, Irma Grese continued the practice of making the prisoners endure standing for lengthy period of time during roll calls. She and other guards sometime enjoyed throwing water over the female prisoners standing in freezing temperatures (Ian Baxter, personal communication, September 30, 2020).

**Trial**

Grese was arrested on April 17, 1945, shortly after British units liberated Bergen-Belsen. The liberators were in profoundly affected by what they saw in the camp, as appeared to be "hell on earth." In fact, even years after the event, many still found it difficult to articulate what they witnessed.

Irma Grese was put on trial with other guards on September 17, 1945 in Lüneburg. She and the camp commandant, Josef Kramer, became the immediate focus for the press covering the proceedings (*Mahn-und Gedenkstatte, Ravensbrück,* 2004). Even at the trial, Irma Grese made sure that she looked picture-perfect.

She also transformed her hairstyle as she now flaunted ". . . a coiffured look accenting her blonde ringlets" (Brown, 2004, 77). Journalists who observed the trial described how beautiful she was. However, most of the time her demeanor was cold, distant, and contemptuous. On some occasions the 21-year-old would laugh, but these incidents were usually the result of some false and absurd concern for the plight of the prisoners that a defense witness made. Once in a while she would also provide court photographers with a demure smile. One of the more damning admissions Irma Grese had to make in court was when she admitted that she continued to carry a whip in violation of the camp commandant's order against guards using them (Langbein, 2004, p. 400).

Witnesses described Grese´s extraordinary brutality and testified that she had taken part in selections for the gas chambers, shot at women prisoners, had beaten and kicked them, and forced them to kneel for hours at roll calls while holding heavy stones above their heads (Cywiński et al., 2017, p. 77).

The court sentenced her to death by hanging and the sentence was carried out on December 13, 1945. On the eve of

their executions, Grese is said to have sung Nazi songs in her cell with the two other condemned female guards (Langbein, 2004, 401). She was the youngest woman ever executed under the auspices of British legal practices (RFU, 2019).

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# Nazi Women

*Ellie Pearlman*

The following focuses on just two of the many Nazi female perpetrators of the Holocaust. Gender cannot be ignored when analyzing the horrors that occurred during the Third Reich's attempt to eradicate European Jewry and other marginalized communities. Indoctrinated with hate, Nazi women such as Dr. Herta Oberheuser and Irma Grese blurred gender roles by imitating men. These same women glorified in taking part in abuse and murder.

## Nazi Women

With the Nazi party's rise to power in Germany in 1933, National Socialists sought to return women to subordinate positions in society. Women were to return to their domestic spheres, and preferably, proudly have blonde hair, blue-eyed babies for the Fatherland. Despite the dominant misogynistic orientation of the ideology, Nazism attracted some women who saw the party as one that restored feminine honor and ideals, nevertheless, most women found it difficult to achieve any real

status within the Nazi party. Women could not join the elite sectors of the Nazi party; however, they could marry a Nazi official to gain authority or influence.

Outside of marriage, female allegiance further manifested itself via employment as *Aufseherinnen* [female overseer], or in other positions found throughout different sectors of the camps. The camp structure was one of the only ways which allowed for women to be promoted to better positions and therefore provide them with a sense of purpose. Despite traditional stereotypes which see women portrayed as homely and nurturing, Nazi women were responsible for many of the atrocities committed within the camps. Indoctrinated with hate, Nazi women such as Herta Oberheuser and Irma Grese blurred gender roles by directly participating in the Holocaust.

**Herta Oberheuser**

It was extremely rare in pre-WWII society for women to become practicing doctors. A woman's highest calling was motherhood. In 1934, Hitler said that a woman's world is her husband, her family, her children, and her house (Travis, 2018).

The Nazi party repealed laws that had previously protected women's rights and introduced new laws barring women from government and university positions, restricting women to the home.

Women's rights groups, such as the moderate *Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine* [Federation of German Women's Associations] were disbanded; replaced with new social groups reinforcing Nazi values (Gruesbeck, n.d.). When the circumstances of the war became unfavorable to Nazi Germany in the early 1940s, more men were required to join the ranks on the front lines, allowing for women to be reluctantly called upon to fill positions which were predominantly held by men (Wodenshek, 2015). Despite the fact that women were granted a license to practice, they were always given less of a chance to establish themselves as practitioners.

Born in May of 1911 in Cologne, Germany, Dr. Herta Oberheuser received her medical degree in Bonn in 1937, specializing in Dermatology (Mikaberidze, 2013). Following the completion of her medical training, 26-year-old Oberheuser joined

the Nazi party as an intern and later as a physician for the League of German Maidens (Frankenburg, 2017). By 1940, Oberheuser was assigned as assistant physician to Dr. Karl Gebhardt, Chief Surgeon of the Nazi policing organization known as the *Schutzstaffel* or SS and was the personal physician to *Reichsführer* SS Heinrich Himmler (Mikaberidze, 2019). With hopes to expand their knowledge of infections, Dr. Gebhardt and Dr. Oberheuser arrived at Ravensbrück eager to use prisoners as their experimental victims (Helm, 2016).

Although Oberheuser was very much a doctor, as a female, she was never granted membership to the SS (Adelé-Marie, 2019). Oberheuser, like many of the other women of the Third Reich took advantage of the "opportunity" granted them within the untraditional concentration camp domain. To prove herself, Oberheuser acted without regard for male superior officer's orders, often stepping outside of the chain of command to conduct her research. She performed some of the cruelest and most appalling medical experiments on prisoners; during her trial the survivors of her experiments stated that she purposely acted cruelly,

withholding beneficial medicines seemingly at her whim (Adelé-Marie, 2019).

It was Oberheuser's job as a physician to examine the women and evaluate suitability for experiments. Prisoners had their legs cut open, bacteria placed in the wounds, and then sewed up to study the healing process (Galberg, 2020). To analyze battlefield wounds, prisoners were subject to gunshots and broken bones (Clarke et al., 2013). Blood flow would then be restricted to the injury and foreign objects such as wood or glass were introduced to simulate damage from shrapnel (Nuremberg Military Tribunals, 1949). Many prisoners were subjected to multiple rounds of injuries. Additionally, once a patient was no longer useful, Oberheuser would inject them with gasoline to kill them faster. These experiments were executed without the use of anesthesia or other medicines, causing immense pain, permanent nerve damage, paralysis, or death from shock (Nuremberg Military Tribunals, 1949).

Following the end of the war, Oberheuser was the only woman to stand trial at the Nuremberg Doctors' Trial. Victims' testimonies from the trial emphasized that the doctors ignored hygiene standards, using unsterilized medical dressings and instruments, while not adhering to the principles of asepsis (Stefaniak-Mrówczyńska, 1946). One of the patients who survived, Stanislaw Michalak, described removing the stitches of her wounds in the hope that letting the pus out would relieve some of the physical anguish brought on by the removal of parts of her leg bones (Doris Ronowicz Symonowicz, 1970). Describing the lack of sanitation, Zofia Stefaniak-Mrówczyńska, recalled that when doctors removed the plaster from her leg, they found a nest of bugs in her wound (Symonowicz, 1970).

In August of 1947, Oberheuser was found guilty of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity and sentenced to 20 years in prison for her part in conducting human experimentation at Ravensbrück (Annas & Grodin, 1992). After just five years in prison, she was released for good behavior and returned to work as a doctor at a family medical practice

(Wodenshek, 2015).

After six years, she was recognized by a former Ravensbrück inmate, resulting in the loss of her medical license. While Oberheuser's victims survived the horrific experiments she conducted, they were left to suffer permanent and painful damages while she resumed a normal life until her death in 1978, unmarred by her past actions (Townsend, 1958). Dr. Herta Oberheuser's strength and success within the male-dominated Nazi medical field inspired other female Nazis like Irma Grese to have the confidence to try and rise through the ranks, despite the sexism of Nazi ideology.

**Irma Grese**

Irma Grese, also known as The Beautiful Beast, was born to Berta and Alfred Grese, on October 7th, 1923. She grew up in Wrechen, Mecklenburg, just 50 miles north of Berlin, as one of five children, in a rural community where her conservative, churchgoing father worked as a dairy farmer (Daniel Patrick Brown, 2004). When Grese was just a child, her mother committed

suicide, leaving Grese and her siblings to be raised by her abusive father. In 1933, the Nazi Party enacted the Enabling Act. This act mandated all schools teach Nazi ideals and ideas to students. This is where Grese's Nazi indoctrination began.

Like her sisters, Grese wanted to join the highly romanticized *Bund Deutscher Mädel* or BDM, the female version of the Hitler youth (Adelé-Marie, 2012). Grese's father forbade his daughters from joining the BDM or any other Nazi organization (Southern, 2018), but per contra, the BDM became compulsory for all Aryan female youth (The League of German Girls, 2015). Grese's troubled home left her seeking support and acceptance which she found as a member of the BDM, but as a result of her membership, tensions with her father escalated.

After unsuccessfully pursuing careers in farming and business, Grese settled for an apprenticeship as a nurse's aide under the guidance of Dr. Karl Gebhardt and Dr. Herta Oberheuser, at the SS convalescent Hohenlychen Medical Hospital (Silver, 2011). Gebhardt took a special interest in Grese, as she was very young, beautiful, and eager. Although Grese would

not succeed within the medical field, Gebhardt recognized Grese's 'ambition', and wanted her to put forth what 'talents' she did have to work in furthering the success of the Third Reich (Adelé-Marie, 2019).

When a position at the all-women's camp for a new female-guard became available, Gebhart helped eighteen-year-old Grese get the job. Having been trained by Nazis, and previously exposed to the Ravensbrück experiments performed by Oberheuser and the other SS doctors at Hohenlychen, the young, impressionable girl had been desensitized to the sadistic treatment of Nazi prisoners and would stop at nothing to be seen as an equal to her male counterparts, no matter the human cost (Adelé-Marie, 2019). Grese quickly made her way up the latter as the youngest Nazi woman with status, authority, and relative autonomy as compared to other women who worked for the SS.

In 1943 she was promoted to a guard position at Auschwitz-Birkenau. There, at age 21, Grese was placed in charge of 30,000 Jewish female prisoners. Grese relished her power and

used it to abuse, and rape prisoners. She also took great joy and sexual gratification from watching the torture of the prisoners by camp doctors, sometimes participating in the torture despite not being a doctor (Adelé-Marie, 2019).

Per various recollections of survivors, Grese is said to have killed at least 30 people per day. Grese was also notorious for setting vicious dogs on prisoners as part of her brutal reign in the Birkenau women's camp. Among Grese's other notorious exploits at Auschwitz-Birkenau was tying the legs together of a woman about to give birth and watching her writhe in agony (Southern, 2018). Grese's violent nature did not always sit well with the other SS men, as they saw her actions as beyond the scope of what they considered "appropriate" for a female guard (Adelé-Marie, 2019). However, she used her youth and sexual attractiveness as a way to make up for this.

Gisella Perl, an inmate physician, recalls some of Grese's masochistic behaviors during operations:

> I happened to look up and encountered the most horrible sight I have ever seen, the memory of which will haunt me for the rest of my life. Irma Grese was enjoying the sight of this human suffering. Her tense body swung back and forth

> in a revealing, rhythmical motion. Her cheeks were flushed, and her wide-open eyes had the rigid, staring look of complete sexual paroxysm. She did this on multiple occasions so she could relive this sadistic moment repeatedly. She always came to watch the operations of these women whose breasts had been slashed open and had become infected with the lice and dirt which pervaded the women's camp. (Southern, 2018)

Perl also noted how Grese would invariably arrive to watch the operation, kicking the victim if their screams interfered with her masturbating pleasure and "giving herself completely to the orgasmic spasms which shook her entire body and made saliva run down from the corner of her mouth" (Southern, 2018).

On June 16, 1945, Grese was indicted with Josef Kramer and 43 other Belsen personnel on charges of murder and maltreatment of prisoners. During the Nuremberg trial investigation interrogations, Grese stood firm, stating that she was "convinced all that had happened was right" (Southern, 2018). Grese was convicted and sentenced to be hanged, along with two other female guards. She was executed on the morning of December 13, 1945, in Hamelin prison. Grese remained unrepentant and unremorseful till her execution, continuing to

believe that her acts were justified by the principles on which Nazism was based.

The cases of Dr. Herta Oberheuser and Irma Grese demonstrate just two of many women who attained great power under the Nazi regime. All of the concentration camps were deadly, regardless these women and their particularly sadistic approaches immensely contributed to the survivor's memorable trauma. While Oberheuser and Grese were not unique in their participation as there were many disturbing Nazi women, they were still believed to be remarkably ruinous.

While we can learn about Oberheuser and Grese because they were found and put on trial, it must be considered that there were many more like these women who managed to escape justices' grip. These women had extensive scope for action considering the male-oriented hierarchy in concentration camps and the killing center, and rather than taking culpability, they took advantage of their situation to try and prove themselves and break through the glass ceiling. Learning about these Nazi women was a chilling reminder that women can be just as cruel as men and even

try to outdo their male counterparts, no matter the cost. The victims' voices cannot be forgotten, but, perhaps, to understand why we must understand them. Studying and remembering the Holocaust is of dire importance as understanding the past is key to changing the future. It is important to remember that gender cannot be ignored when analyzing the heinousness that occurred during the Third Reich's attempt to eradicate European Jewry and other marginalized communities.

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**Unit Seven: The Holocaust in the East**

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

The Nazi attacks in Eastern European were horrific. Many students are not aware of the events that took place in Rumbula. On November 30 and December 8, 1941, a total 26,000 people were murdered in the outskirts of Riga. Of these 25,000 were Latvian citizens and about 1,000 were brought in from the Third Reich. Please (WARNING: graphic textual descriptions) read: Remembering Rumbula where 25,000 Jews were murdered between 30 November and 8 December 1941 in the Rumbula forest close to Riga, Latvia. It was one of the largest mass shootings in Eastern Europe after Babi Yar; at the Babi Yar ravine near to Kyiv, Ukraine, from 29 through 30 September 1941, in just 36-48 hours, over 33,000 Jews were shot to death. Others were also murdered at Babi Yar, including civilians, Roma, and POWs.

As Adam Yunis illustrates in his critical essay, accounts and studies from the East were obstructed by the emergent Cold War. Eastern survivors that I have spoken with bolster the conclusions that Yunis draws in that the designation of a survivor

for those in the East was complicated and varied from their western counterparts.

# The Memory of the Holocaust on the Nazi Occupied Territory of the Former Soviet Union

*Adam Yunis*

The Nazi Holocaust in the East was one of the most destructive events in history and the memory of this time continues to impact Soviet survivors and global politics. The pace of memory and remembrance was impacted greatly by post war social and political conditions, creating a silence that was not present in Central and Western Europe. The lack of access to Soviet records, the fall of the Soviet Union and a wave of Jewish immigrants in the 1980s and 1990s to the U.S. all contributed to a greater recognition of the Holocaust by Bullets in the East. Many Soviet Holocaust survivors did not consider themselves survivors, and the USSR generally did not recognize the separate experience of Jews due to a focus on the uniform suffering of the Soviet people. The lack of research into the details of Nazi operations in the USSR has been confronted by several groups that seek to shed light on places of mass murder. This essay will discuss the memory of the

Holocaust in the former Soviet Union and recent efforts to both recognize Jewish suffering during the war and research sites of mass killing.

The memory of the Holocaust in the former Soviet Union has developed at a slower pace than in Central and Western Europe due to several factors to be discussed. During the existence of the Soviet Union, Soviet authorities cultivated their own interpretation of historical memory which aimed to dismiss existing ethnic tension, conceal the effects of the Soviet invasion of Eastern Europe in 1939, and sought to replace the memories of individuals and communities with the narrative of the new imagined community-the Soviet people. The fall of the Soviet Union, a wave of Jewish immigration to the United States and Israel, and significant increase in research into the Holocaust in the FSU (Former Soviet Union) all contributed to a greater understanding of the Holocaust by Bullets and recognition of Soviet survivors. This essay will discuss the memory of the Holocaust on the Nazi occupied territory of the former Soviet Union and recent efforts to both document and recognize the Soviet Jewish experience.

**Memory of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union, 1945-1991**

While decades of silences would follow, immediate wartime and post-war research was done to compile experiences of Soviet Jewry under Nazism. Chief among this was the work done by Soviet Jewish novelist Ilya Ehrenburg and Soviet Jewish war correspondent Vasilij Grossman. Grossman interviewed Jewish survivors as well as non-Jewish wartime residents about the fate of Soviet Jews and documented the liberation of Treblinka and Majdanek, publishing some of the first accounts of Nazi killing centres. The material intended to form *The Black Book: The Ruthless Murder of Jews by German-Fascist Invaders Throughout the Temporarily Occupied Regions of the Soviet Union and in the Death Camps of Poland during the War 1941-1945*, to be published in 1946 in Russian and Yiddish.

The correspondence between Grossman and Ehrenburg is telling, as it predicts future Soviet treatment of the Holocaust. Grossman observed that the word 'Jews' was used too frequently and suggested to avoid repetition of this word in order not to irritate the reader and to substitute it with general terms like

'people or 'civilians'' (Baranova, 2015). On October 7th, 1947, the decision was made by Department for Propaganda of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist party that since the book "contains grave political errors", it "may not be published." All copies were sent to storage warehouses where they were destroyed in 1948 (Baranova, 2015). Thus, because it singled out Jewish suffering and because it questioned the image of friendship of peoples in Soviet society, the major and probably the only post-war work that treated the Holocaust in the Soviet Union as a separate Jewish phenomenon was never published in the USSR. Copies survived and were later published in Yiddish, English and eventually in Russian after the fall of the Soviet Union.

The immediate post war Stalinist censorship also prevented the publishing of works of Soviet Jewish photographers who were on the front lines documenting the Nazi Holocaust with the Soviet Army. Professor of Jewish History at the University of Colorado, David Shneer, has recently written *Through Soviet Jewish Eyes* (2010), which published for the first time many photographs taken by an elite group of two dozen Soviet-Jewish photographers who

were charged by the Stalinist state to document the Holocaust and other crimes against Soviet citizens. An important work in the study of Soviet Jewry, it removes Jews and their relationship to the Soviet Union from a lens of repression and silence, and instead shows Soviet Jewish agency in their own struggle and in their contributions to building the Soviet Union and documenting Nazi crimes. Post-war Stalinist antisemitism had the effect of silencing the patriotic contributions Jews had made to the Soviet Union, and future work must continue to recognize that the Jewish struggle to document Nazi crimes was also a part of a larger patriotic contribution that Soviet Jews made during the war.

Soviet historiography in the post war decades that followed the Second World War did not treat the Holocaust as a separate, Jewish event and fate. The event was not erased from official Soviet history but adapted within the confines of the post war ideological framework. Soviet martyrdom emphasized a universal suffering and the defeat of the racist and murderous Nazism (Baranova, 2015). Discouraging any emphasis of the Jewish origin

of Nazi policies became standard in Soviet history and in public commemorations.

American Jewish scholar Zvi Gitelman (1991) in his article "Politics and the Historiography of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union" claims that a survey of Soviet literature reveals that there was no uniform treatment of the Holocaust in the Soviet Union. Some works do admit and describe a Jewish tragedy, others discuss some parts, while others prefer to refrain from any national and ethnic origin of victims. Unity among all Soviet people meant not interrogating the recent past. This was the goal of Soviet policy after the Second World War. The Soviets authorities viewed any nationalist movement as a threat to its control. To create a Soviet identity, this unifying experience of suffering played a large role in creating a feeling of community among all Soviet people. Therefore, recognition of a separate experience, a Jewish tragedy, one that involved local collaboration and capitalized on native antisemitism, did not fit Soviet postwar interests, meaning it could not exist.

Antisemitism certainly played a role in Soviet treatment of the Holocaust, but not addressing how the Holocaust occurred in the western territories-Western Belarus, Western Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia, areas briefly annexed by the Soviet Union from 1939-41, also had the practical concern of suppressing ethnic tension. The reluctance to address collaboration in accounts of Nazi massacres is reflective of Soviet acknowledgment of existing antisemitism among its population. Soviet authorities tried to avoid any discussion that could explain why so many people in Soviet society were so inflicted by antisemitism and hostile to the existing Soviet regime of '39-41, that they participated in Nazi massacres. By doing this, Soviet authorities suppressed the fact that the occupation of Eastern Europe and the Baltic by the Soviet Union from '39-41 created an enormous amount of antisemitism, local populations scapegoating the Jews for their problems and associating Jews with the new communist regime. For Soviet authorities it was better not to get into the details of how the Holocaust occurred in the Soviet Union, to assign the killing of

Jews to the Nazis as a part of their greater policy for Europe which involved cruelty and killings of every Soviet ethnic group.

This is not to say that there were not efforts by individuals in the Soviet Union to commemorate the Holocaust. The most famous of these efforts was the controversy over the ravine at Babi Yar. Babi Yar was a site near Kiev, where 33,771 Jews were killed in 2 days -September 29-30, and where 100,000 people would be murdered. When the war ended, no monument was placed there to commemorate this event and there were plans to turn this site into a park and a stadium.

Soviet writer Evgeniy Evtushenko published the famous poem "*Бабий Яр"* [Babi Yar]. The poem spoke not only of Jews murdered in Babi Yar but of Soviet mistreatment of Jews. Famous Soviet composer Dmitry Shostakovich included the poem in his Symphony No. 13 (Lebovic, 2017). These artistic and musical pieces by Soviet intellectuals attracted world attention to the problem of Soviet remembrance of the Holocaust and revealed that Soviet society was far from free of antisemitism. It also importantly demonstrated that some intellectuals were

uncomfortable with the lack of commemoration of Jewish suffering in the war. Finally, public pressure resulted in a memorial placed at Babi Yar, but the inscription reads: “here in 1941- 1943, the German fascist invaders executed more than 100.000 citizens of Kiev and prisoners of war”. Despite the fact that more than 30 percent of victims killed by the Nazis in Babi Yar were Jews, as well as the fact that over one million Ukrainian Jews were murdered in the Holocaust by the Nazis and Ukrainian militias, there was no reference to a Jewish tragedy.

**The Fall of Communism**

The fall of the Soviet Union brought about many changes to Holocaust research and memory in the former Soviet Union. As immigration restrictions began to loosen, there was a large increase in Jewish immigration to the United States and Israel during the 80s and 90s. This played a crucial role in the growth of recognition of Soviet survivors. Soviet Jews who had survived the Holocaust did not find an environment in the Soviet Union that was receptive to any recognition of the tragedy of Soviet Jewry. Antisemitism remained a constant force for Jews in the Soviet Union in the post-

war period, as religion of any kind was actively suppressed in the Soviet territories. Mentioning the Jewish roots of the tragedy of that was the Holocaust by Bullets was not advisable, and for many second-generation survivors, children who fled or hid with their parents, they grew up not knowing the details of their survival. The situation of Jews is further complicated by the fact that they were living in areas where local people took part in the killing of Soviet Jews. This created a prominent sentiment that it was best to move on and not bring up any history that could hurt their current situation. Upon immigration to the United States and Israel, there came opportunities for Jewish survivors from the USSR to finally come out and speak about their experiences.

The 1990s saw an increase in Holocaust documentation, organizations like the Shoah foundation recorded survivor testimony in the United States, this coincided with the immigration of Soviet survivors whose stories had never been fully recognized or told. Many recent Jewish immigrants to the U.S. did not view themselves as survivors, as the dominant view in the latter half of the 20th century associated a survivor with someone who had

survived a Nazi concentration camp. This perception of the Holocaust and survivors was harmful as it does not account for those who hid, fled, or even fought against the Nazis. With the fall of the Soviet Union, new opportunities for researchers and historians developed to explore the Holocaust by Bullets, as Soviet archives were opened, and historians and researchers could freely work in areas of mass killing. This combination of new historical research of the Holocaust in the FSU, and the awakening of memory by Soviet Jews with the help of American Jewish organizations allowed for greater recognition and publication of the brutality of Nazi and their collaborators' actions.

It also allowed for Soviet survivors to receive recognition for their suffering and be thought of as Holocaust survivors, their individual and familial stories of survival under the most horrible conditions documented by historical institutions and NGOs. This helped in the creation of a Soviet Jewish survivor identity for those now living abroad.

**Politics of Memory**

A contentious politics of memory developed in the newly created states after the fall of the USSR. With independence from the USSR came a new issue of how these states would commemorate their history. Ukrainian, Latvian, Belarusian, Estonian involvement in the Holocaust is generally not recognized by their respective governments, and public memorials of the Holocaust have created political or social problems. The question of the local population's collaboration with the Nazis remains the most problematic issue. This issue arose during the 2014-onging conflict in Eastern Ukraine, where some Ukrainian militia groups and protesters evoked Nazi imagery, tattoos and uniforms in their rebellion.

Many celebrated Stephen Bandera, founder of the OUN B, an organization that collaborated with Nazi Germany and that murdered thousands of Jews as well as perpetrated a brutal ethnic cleansing campaign against Poles in Eastern Galicia, killing between 50,000 and 100,000 (Snyder, 2003). The OUN B and Bandera's Ukrainian ultra-nationalism ideology have remained a constant force on the Ukrainian far right.

The cycle then begins of Russian propaganda claiming that there is a broad sympathy to Neo Nazism in Ukraine, which prevents Ukrainian society from addressing the Ukrainian far right and their history, as they do not want to feed into Russian propaganda. Russian nationalism has also been on a dramatic rise, with a mythical version of Russia's history at its core. History remains a constant political issue in the states of the former Soviet Union.

On one hand, progress has evidently been made in comparison with the Soviet era and the years of Perestroika. On the other hand, public discourse often remains either hostile or uninformed about what took place. Significant progress remains in the former Soviet Union for Holocaust remembrance, as the recent war and unrest in Ukraine has shown a weaponization of history on both sides of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

**Recent Research into the Holocaust by Bullets**

State run organizations and NGOs emerged after the fall of the FSU that now document and research the Holocaust in the former Soviet Union. This essay will focus on the work of Father

Patrick Debois. Debois was the grandson of a French soldier who had been deported the Nazi prison camp Rava-Ruska, located on the Ukrainian-Polish border (Desbois, 2008). This area has a particularly brutal war history, the Holocaust and other ethnic based killings still haunt the region. After being ordained in 1986, Debois worked with the Jewish community of France in a variety of roles facilitating relations between the Catholic and Jewish communities, eventually serving nationally as the secretary of the French conference of Bishops for Relations with the Jewish community from 1999 to 2016.

Due to his grandfather's experiences and silence about the Holocaust, Debois developed an intense interest in the Holocaust, starting from childhood. In 2002 he travelled to Ukraine to visit where his father was imprisoned and to pay his respects to the Jewish victims. Upon arrival he did not see a marking or commemoration to the victims of the Holocaust in Ukraine. Desbois knew that before World War II more than 15,000 Jews had lived in the town, but when he asked to see where they had been murdered, the mayor brushed him off and said no one knew

anything about it. "How could more than 10,000 Jews be killed in the village and nobody knows?" he says. "I knew I needed to find out what happened. So, I came back two times, three times, four times to Rawa-Ruska. And then the mayor lost the election, and a new mayor was elected, much less Soviet" (Breger, 2011). Upon returning the new mayor led Desbois to a forest, a place of mass killing, where 50 elderly men and women gathered to tell of their experiences witnessing the Holocaust.

They gave detailed testimony to the murder of the Jewish community in their city. This testimony had never been given before, and Desbois saw an opportunity for a larger scale project. Desbois realized what a wealth of information on the Holocaust was available on the Holocaust in Eastern Europe if you interviewed the last witnesses and marked sites of killing. In order to right the historical wrong of neglecting areas of mass killing, Desbois helped found Yahad-In Unum, combing the Hebrew word-Yahad, meaning "together," with the Latin phrase In Unum, meaning "in one."

The global organization collects eyewitness testimony and forensic evidence about the mass killing of Jews and Roma in Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Lithuania, Poland, Moldova and Romania between 1941 and 1944. Local contemporary witnesses are interviewed about the mass shootings that occurred near their homes and the mass graves are located and documented. Desbois (2008) estimates that there are no less than 1 million victims buried in 1,200 graves in Ukraine. Yahad-In Unum's work is crucial to counter claims of Holocaust deniers who use lack of official documentation to makes claims on the validity of Holocaust evidence. Yahad-In Unum has received widespread praise among Holocaust institutions and their work has documented at this moment 1,843 execution sites.

Yahad-In Unum hopes by exposing evidence of these lesser-known crimes against humanity, they are bringing closure to the memory of the victims. A forward-thinking organization, they hope to spread awareness of the need to recognize and denounce the ongoing epidemic of global genocide. Yahad-In Unum and Patrick Desbois have also worked to document the Yazidi

genocide in Iraq committed by the Islamic State. As time passes, it seems that NGOs will be some of the leading institutions that seek to properly commemorate and document the Holocaust by Bullets in the former Soviet Union. Father Debois and his team have recently interviewed Chicago Holocaust survivors from the FSU who witnessed or learned about the killings of their families.

**The Soviet Jewish Experience**

Significant progress has been made in the documentation of killing sites and in remembrance of Soviet Jewish victims of the Holocaust and in recognition of the survivors from the USSR. This work has had the unfortunate burden of beginning just as the last survivor and witness generations reach old age. Only since the fall of the Soviet Union have Soviet Jews gained an opportunity to tell their stories of survival and commemorate their family members murdered by the Nazis. Crucial to this development has been the work of individuals and organizations to recognize the separate experiences of Jews during the war, and document and research the Holocaust by Bullets in Eastern Europe. During the post war years of the USSR, Soviet authorities prevented the recognition of a

separate Jewish experience during the Second World War due to political concerns and antisemitism. The fall of the USSR allowed for Jewish immigration to places where some found communities more welcome to hearing their stories of persecution.

There is still much work to do in gaining wider recognition for Soviet Jewish survivors. Local to Chicago, Holocaust Community Services is an organization that seeks to publicize and educate on the Holocaust in the former Soviet Union and document the stories of Soviet Jewish Holocaust survivors that now live in the United States. Abroad, the politics of memory of the Holocaust in the former Soviet states often remains contentious, with patriotic celebration of history often turning into a whitewashing of collaboration with the Nazis. The Holocaust by Bullets, and those Soviet Jews who survived must be a crucial part of any narrative of the Holocaust. The final generation of Soviet survivors are now in old age, many children or teenagers during the war. Their memories of their families murdered by the Nazis, and often of their parents who never got a chance to speak about their survival, offer some of our last personal connections to the

victims of the Holocaust. Their stories must be listened to and documented. Soviet survivor Yakov Mozyrsky was interviewed only recently on his wartime experience as a Jewish child. His father had fought with the Soviet army for the complete duration of the war. He recounts:

> In October 1945 Papa was discharged and came back to Timashevo to find us, and together we returned to Kiev. I remember that we walked along poorly lit railroads to the house in which we lived before the war. No one knew what to expect. I stumbled and fell on a rail. When Dad picked me up and lifted me up high, I saw tears in his eyes. These were the eyes of a man who had gone through the entire war, who had seen blood and death, who was wounded several times, and who now simply got scared for his son. These eyes I would never forget. (Mozyrsky, 2020)

For this last generation of Soviet survivors, the memories of the war never left, we should cherish the opportunity to learn from and recognize the Soviet Jewish experience.

**Further Resources**

***Books***

*Through Soviet Jewish Eyes: Photography, War and the Holocaust* by David Shneer

*Never Heard Never Forget* produced by Holocaust Community Services. A compilation of Soviet Jewish survivor's stories who immigrated to United States and settled in Chicago.

*The Holocaust by Bullets: A Priest's Journey to Uncover the Truth Behind the Murder of 1.5 Million Jews* by Patrick Desbois. Also see https://www.yahadinunum.org/

*A Writer at War: A Soviet Journalist with the Red Army, 1941-1945* by Vasily Grossman. Grossman takes the reader through the chaos of the Nazi invasion to the liberation of Nazi death camps. A Soviet Jew, Grossman was popular among soldiers for his honest reporting of the front. Grossman intended to publish his accounts of the Nazi Holocaust in *The Black Book of Soviet Jewry*, which eventually was published in English and is also available to read.

*The Bones of Berdichev: The Life and Fate of Vasily Grossman* by John Garrad and Carol Garrad

*Holocaust in the Ukraine* by Boris Zabarko

*The Ravine: A Family, A Photograph, a Holocaust Massacre Revealed* by Wendy Lower

***In Chicago***

Professor Elliot Lefkowitz recorded around 50 video interviews with survivors from FSU, which are all in the Illinois Holocaust Museum's collection. These interviews offer a great resource for anyone looking to research the FSU further and watch eye-witness testimony.

***Films***

*Come and See* (1985) directed by Elem Klimov. An intense and historically accurate depiction of the brutality of war in the FSU. Considered one of the best movies about war ever made, this film is helpful for understanding the conditions many Soviet survivors "fled" from, as the verbiage used does not accurately describe the horrors many endured to survive.

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## Unit Eight: Holocaust, Architecture, Film, & Music

This chapter has several components to it. We examine architecture with Nathan Harpaz, then Holocaust biographical film with Phyllis Lassner, and finally music in the Holocaust with Susan Eischeid. Examining the Holocaust through these unique lenses provide a deeper understanding of the many facets of Holocaust studies.

### Architect Alexander Levy: Berlin – Tel Aviv – Auschwitz

*Nathan Harpaz*

When I was working on my book *Zionist Architecture and Town Planning: The Building of Tel Aviv (1919 - 1929)*, I found in the intriguing life of architect Alexander Levy, who is one of the central figures in this book, several connections to my family's history. Levy and my maternal grandfather Moshe Yehuda Kaplan acquired their artistic education in Berlin, both got involved with Zionism and arrived in Tel Aviv during the same year (1920), and both struggled financially trying to pursue their professions. My grandfather stayed in Tel Aviv despite the difficulties, while Levy returned to Europe and, like my paternal grandparents Sarah and

Isiah Fenster and my uncle Max Fenster from Vienna, perished in Auschwitz. This essay is an homage to architect Alexander Levy and his tragic saga. Levy offered his services to the Zionist Organization in Berlin, the hub of Zionism at that time, during a crucial time after World War I, when a new hope for massive immigration to the Land of Israel was expected. Ironically, Levy, who attempted to build an advanced shelter for future persecuted Jews in then Palestine, returned to Europe after his failed career to be victimized by the Nazi regime.

Architect Alexander Levy (1883-1942) expressed interest in Zionism after finishing his studies in architecture and starting work for a building company in Berlin in 1907. Levy followed the idea of re-establishing the Jewish state, serving as a shelter or refuge to Jews escaping from antisemitism. In 1908, he offered his services as an architect to Arthur Ruppin (1876-1943), then the director of the Palestine office of the Zionist Organization in Jaffa. In November of 1912, Levy prepared four different housing plans for new immigrants in Palestine, and a year later, he proposed to organize an exhibition on housing to be displayed during the

eleventh Congress in Vienna. In the same year, he also sent several proposals for building projects, including the port of Jaffa, prototypes for residential units, housing for new Yemenite Jewish immigrants, a plan for a hotel, and a new approach to building materials. None of Levy's proposals were accepted by the Zionist Organization (Meyer-Maril, 1994).

In 1913, Levy applied for two positions in Palestine offered by the Zionist Organization, but he failed to obtain either of them. The position of building engineer in Palestine was given to Richard Michel, and the position of the director of the technical department in Palestine was given to Wilhelm Hecker. Levy sent an angry letter to Ruppin, but he still proposed cooperation in planning working-class housing. Ruppin, in his reply, explained to Levy that the difficult conditions in Palestine prevented his office from hiring architects, and he encouraged Levy to move to Palestine and practice as a private architect (Meyer-Mari,1994).

In the spring of 1919, with the support of the Association of Jewish Architects and Engineers, Levy founded a new organization, the Association of the Builders of the Land of Israel.

The goal of the Association of the Builders of the Land of Israel was to resolve the problems of building and housing in Palestine, accompanying the anticipated mass immigration of Jews to the land of Israel. In May of 1919, the association organized a conference on future building in Palestine, including an exhibition of plans and models of housing solutions. The ideas introduced in the exhibition were published with plans and photos by Alexander Levy in Davis Trietsch's magazine *Volk und Land.* Levy's essay in this magazine titled "On Building and Housing" spread over four issues between September and November 1919. The majority of the text and a portion of the illustrations for Levy's future book was published in this magazine.

In May of 1920, Levy proposed another plan to the Builder Company in London to work together on the foundation of a quarry, a cement factory, a wood workshop, and machinery shops to assist with the building of 1000 small dwellings per year. This plan was also rejected. In the same year, Levy continued to promote his ideas and recruit architects to the Association of the

Builders of the Land of Israel, and in Berlin, he published a 56-page booklet entitled *Building and Housing in New Palestine*.

The publication of Alexander Levy's *Building and Housing in New Palestine* is the most comprehensive proposal for inexpensive and rapid building construction in the early days of the Zionist movement. It meticulously and methodologically reviews the most advanced European theories and studies relevant to the topic and concludes with concrete and realistic recommendations for implementation. The plan covers such topics as the company's role in initiating and executing building construction, the crucial availability of materials, the presentation of different types of accommodations, and the utilization of standardization of materials and labor techniques.

The historical rationale for Levy's plan was in the new political arena that emerged after World War I: the end of the Ottoman occupation of Palestine and the beginning of the British mandate. In the publication, Levy expressed his hope that soon the British administration would permit a large number of Jewish immigrants to settle in Palestine, and therefore a detailed and

practical plan would be needed to construct mass housing. This prediction of mass Jewish immigration to Palestine was triggered by the Balfour Declaration of 1917, where the British government recognized the rights of the Jewish people to establish their homeland in Palestine, and it was intensified later when the British governed the region after the war. Levy's plan was part of massive post-war publications that dealt with the expectations of a "New Palestine."

Levy based his plan on current European concepts, and, as a scientist, he presented data from the field, theories of prominent experts, and then practical conclusions. Like a classical technocrat, Levy filled his writing with plenty of details like statistics, costs, and dimensions to give his plan credibility and practicality, but he ignored significant obstacles that might derail his proposal.

From a personal perspective, Levy demonstrated throughout his publication integrity and truthfulness through his comments, and sometimes he revealed outspoken criticism. He stated that laymen led current Jewish construction in Palestine without any skill and very few notable achievements. Furthermore,

he labeled the administrators in charge of building construction in Palestine “primitive” and lacking in business skills due to philanthropic dependency and patronage. Ironically, with his blunt attitude, Levy was a freethinker himself and an unconventional scholar, which might illuminate his difficulties with promoting his plan to the Zionist Organization during his activities in Berlin and later when he worked in Tel Aviv.

Alexander Levy finally paid attention to Dr. Ruppin’s advice, and he arrived in Palestine in 1920, the same year that he published his book. Levy came to Tel Aviv, together with Nadja Strasser (1871-1955), a writer concentrating on socialism and feminism in a Jewish context. They met each other in Berlin after Strasser studied at Vienna University (Archive of the International Institute of Social History).

Upon arrival to Tel Aviv, Levy founded the building company Kedem (Orient) based on the same idea as the Association of the Builders of the Land of Israel in Berlin. Levy converted the Bella Vista Hotel in Jaffa into the company’s headquarters, including a department for public works, a

department for architectural design, a laboratory for examining local and imported building materials, and carpentry and metal workshops. The movie hall of the former hotel became a drawing room and exhibition space, and the employees of the company lived in other rooms. The company's early projects included the construction of roads in Tel Aviv and the building of the experimental agricultural station near the Herzliya Hebrew High School in 1921, a project initiated by the Zionist leader Otto Warburg who wrote the introduction to Levy's publication in Berlin (Meyer-Maril, 1994).[i]

One of the early experiments with the modern-oriental style in Tel Aviv was conducted by Alexander Levy. His first major private commissioned project was the residence for Menachem Ussishkin (1863-1941), the Zionist leader and head of the Jewish National Fund.

At the peak of the cooperation between the Bezalel Art Academy and Tel Aviv architects in 1924, Alexander Levy participated in an exhibition of Tel Aviv architecture at Bezalel in Jerusalem. One of the exhibition's goals was to encourage the use

of Bezalel's artistic ceramic tiles in Tel Aviv. That event also facilitated the development of a personal relationship between Levy and Boris Schatz, the founder and head of the academy, and they began to correspond with each other(Meyer-Maril, 1994). Despite the close relations with Schatz Levy, inspiration from Bezalel was manifested only in his few early designs.

Ironically, Alexander Levy, who rejected eclecticism and spoke out against "façade artists" in his Berlin publication, became one of the most eclectic architects in Tel Aviv. He designed the Kleisler house as a neo-classical building decorated with pilasters, cement reliefs, and even Greek metopes and triglyphs. In the Lifshitz House, Levy kept the classical tradition of rustic stone on the ground floor, and he added cement-made classical ornamentation throughout the façade. In the same year, Levy designed the Ussishkin House utilizing a modern oriental style, and in the Schlossberg House, he attached oriental arches to a western European building.

The peak of the eclectic trend in the architecture of Tel Aviv in the mid-1920s can be noticed in the exotic building that

Alexander Levy designed for Morris Bloch on the intersection of three streets. The three-story building was built on a lot shaped like a triangle and featured arched porches on each floor. The stepped roof in the front of the building granted the structure the name "The Pagoda House."

After his arrival to Tel Aviv, Levy attempted to re-establish the settlement company that he led in Berlin, and through its activities, he tried to implement his ideas as presented in his book. After several projects under his company, Kedem, Levy struggled financially and gradually compromised his ideal architectural concepts. This early monetary difficulty can be seen in his advertisement posted in the Haaretz newspaper in 1921: "One who is willing to invest money in the purpose of gaining decent profits should build houses in Tel Aviv by the architect Alexander Levy, the author of the book *Building and Housing in New Palestine*." In this advertisement, Levy departs from his idealistic approach to building in Palestine and tries to convince potential clients to initiate building construction for investment. The illustration of a plain functional building in this advertisement is not a typical

design for Levy's buildings in Tel Aviv at that time. The majority of Levy's designs were vastly eclectic, except his 1924 renovation of a house on Rothschild Boulevard.

In the same year that Alexander Levy designed one of the most eclectic and picturesque buildings in Tel Aviv (the Pagoda House, 1925), he bitterly criticized the state of the city's architecture:

> What we need now is a system and not temporality. Tel Aviv must turn into a city, organic structure, and not a chaos of streets and buildings. Tel Aviv also must become a city of the Land of Israel and not the new Pinsk [a town in Belarus] … Even the greatest friend of Tel Aviv would not be able to claim that the construction of the city was based on a serious principle. On a vast area of the city there is not one awkward street that can be deemed rational. (Levy, 1925)

Levy's statement on the chaotic and irrational architectural design of Tel Aviv is another example of the gap between his desired,

ideal concepts and the gloomy reality of his inability to elevate the city to a professional and advanced level.

Despite a relatively successful career in the early 1920s, and with the decline of building in Tel Aviv in the late 1920s, architect Alexander Levy struggled financially. His criticisms of the establishment and the state of architecture in Tel Aviv raised his level of frustration, and in 1927, the beginning of the economic crisis, he and Nadja Strasser left Palestine and returned to Berlin.

Three years after leaving Tel Aviv to return to Germany, Alexander Levy finally materialized one of his theoretical concepts, and in 1930 he started a company that manufactured small, compact houses. Levy, who changed his last name to Lee, named the company "Lee Klienhausbau," and he displayed models of such houses in an exhibition in 1932, together with other architects, including Walter Gropius, Bruno Taut, and Erich Mendelsohn. As the economic crisis worsened in Germany, Levy's company prospered from the need for inexpensive accommodations. Unfortunately, Levy's architectural success lasted for only a few years, and after the rise of the Nazi regime, he

and Nadja Strasser fled to France. During this time, he managed to design several buildings in Paris, and he also wrote several essays, including the “History of Jewish Achievements.” Levy, motivated by his past failures and frustrations, continued to criticize the Zionist Organization on the same issues he argued about during his careers in Berlin and Tel Aviv.

Celebrated German architect Peter Behrens, whom Levy admired and inspired from, was called back to Germany in 1936 from the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts to teach at the Prussian Academy of Fine Arts under Hitler's approval. Behrens participated in Hitler’s grand urban plan for Berlin, and he worked under the chief Nazi architect Albert Speer. Behrens died from a heart attack in the Hotel Bristol in Berlin in 1940.

Similarly, German architect Paul Schultze-Naumburg, whom Levy appreciated in his book for his innovative concepts regarding the arrangement of houses, became a prominent Nazi architect and artist. Schultze-Naumburg convinced Hitler to reject modern architecture and to adapt classical and medieval designs.

Tragically, while waiting to receive a visa to the United States, Alexander Levy was sent to a French detention camp, and eventually, he was deported to Auschwitz in August of 1942. On the way to the death camp Levy wrote his last postcard to Nadja Strasser:

> My dear, the more we approach the realities, the less they are frightening. I am in the train and tolerant the ride well. Our friends promised me to take care of you. Everything is the best in the best of these worlds, and I hope to see you soon. I will write no more before Christmas. I congratulate you on your birthday on September 25th. (Meyer-Maril, 1994).

Levy perished in Auschwitz in the same year before the arrival of Christmas (Meyer-Maril, 1994).

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Phyllis Lassner is an expert on gender, film and biographical representations in the Holocaust. Her important essay reveals how the Holocaust has been represented in filmic format.

## Biographical Holocaust Films

*Phyllis Lassner*

Feature films, docudramas, and documentaries have become the most widely disseminated source of Holocaust history. This essay focuses on biographical films or Biopics, that is stories based on the experiences of actual individuals at the time, recorded in diaries during or after the war, as with memoirs, or compilations of autobiographical materials by others. The categories of biopics considered here are children, gender and sexuality, perpetrators, and resisters.

### Introduction: Witness Testimony

Researched focused on the Holocaust was propelled by the discovery of massive numbers of detailed written records kept by the many departments and agencies of Nazi Germany's vast bureaucracy. Much of this documentation served as evidence against high-ranking Nazi officials at the thirteen Nuremberg trials

between 1945 and 1949. The prosecution of these trials and later ones also depended on other forms of evidence, such as oral interrogation of the plaintiffs. While necessary for judicial reasons, this focus on perpetrators offered only one side of the Holocaust. It was the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1960 that demonstrated the crucial perspective of victims and the oral testimonies of survivors to learn how the Holocaust was experienced by those who were targeted for extermination by Nazi Germany.

Despite the lapses and traumas that would affect survivors' memories, their individual testimonies have served many purposes, including legal decisions, ethical judgments, and historical knowledge regarding perpetrators, the conditions of the camps, forms of punishment, methods of extermination, and a wide variety of resistance and attempts to escape. Individual testimony has also illuminated the observations, experiences and responses of victims, survivors, bystanders, and onlookers in the countless sites of the Nazi genocide, including the ghettoes, concentration and slave

labor camps, killing centres, hiding places, on the run, and escape and rescue efforts.

**Written Survivor Accounts**

In addition to these oral testimonies, written accounts, mostly by survivors, have become object of intense historical and literary study and a rewarding source for teaching. Written testimony includes memoirs, such as Elie Wiesel's *Night* and Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz,* diaries, such as Anne Frank's, and court and transcripts of trials and interviews. It is important to note that our access to written survivor testimony depends on translation from the witnesses' native languages, including German, Czech, Polish, Russian, Italian, and Yiddish. However, even considering inexact word choices, grammar, and written emphases, these sources remain crucial. Even when written testimony consists only of rescued pieces of paper, as in the Oneg Shabbos Project,[51] being able to read these personal recollections

[51] The project was organized by Emanuel Ringelblum, a Polish Jewish journalist, who asked people throughout the Warsaw Ghetto to record their

means that we can closely examine the many strands of their meaning, including their emotional and behavioral responses and intended effects on readers and the historical record. Helpfully, when written testimony is published, it is most often accompanied by introductions to their historical, geographical, political, and experiential contexts, and by explanatory footnotes, glossaries of technical terms, maps, and on occasion, photographs.

**Film**

The medium that has been responsible for the most widespread dissemination of Holocaust experience is film. In 1978, the enormous popularity of the four-part television miniseries *Holocaust* launched widespread interest in the Nazi genocide.[52] Although the series was fictional and contained historical inaccuracies, it succeeded in depicting innocent people of all ages being brutally rounded up on November 9, 1938 in the pogrom

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observations and experiences as a historical record. The story is recounted by Samuel Kassow.

[52] An estimated 15 million households or 20 million people viewed the series, including about 50% of West German adults.

called *Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass), and being transported in stifling cattle cars to ghettoes, concentration camps, and killing centres. This was a history that for most Americans had been unknown and for audiences elsewhere, had been ignored, neglected, or unacknowledged.

Following the success of *Holocaust,* the number of films dealing with Holocaust experiences proliferated both in the United States and Europe. The vast European terrain on which the Holocaust was perpetrated, the Nazis' myriad forms of persecution and murder, and various kinds of resistance, escape attempts, and survival have been translated into feature films, docudramas, and documentaries. The most popular of these films, including Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993)*,* Roberto Benigni's *Life is Beautiful* (1998)*,* Roman Polanski's *The Pianist* (2002), and Edward Zwick's *Defiance* (2008), have drawn large audiences but have also been criticized by scholars and teachers for the very reasons that make them popular, including suspenseful and successful stories of heroic rescue, the will to survive against all odds, risky and adventurous escapes, and romance. In response to

these features, many scholars and teachers argue that such sentimental and sensational distortions of the complex characters of victims, their relationships or successful attempts to survive lead to misunderstanding the Holocaust. In addition to misrepresenting a vast and complicated history, the most damaging effect of such exceptional stories is to give support to Holocaust deniers who claim that there were far fewer than six million deaths and that most were caused by disease, not Nazi perpetration.[53] Therefore, Holocaust scholars and educators maintain that it is crucial for films to represent the Holocaust with historical accuracy. Holocaust film expert Laurence Baron argues that the value of Holocaust films is that they

> figuratively or literally evoke a sense of the collective and individual choices and historical circumstances that enabled Hitler to persecute or liquidate millions of civilians he designated as asocial, deviant, ideological, racial, or religious enemies. (2005, viii-ix)[54]

[53] See Deborah Lipstadt (1993).

[54] Baron (2005) is the major source for developing Holocaust film categories and explicating individual films within them. Other comprehensive sources

**The Biopic and Its Sources**

The primary and most prevalent source and form of Holocaust filmmaking has been the "biopic," that is stories based on the experiences of actual individuals at the time, recorded in diaries during or after the war, as with memoirs, or compilations of autobiographical materials by others. One of the first diaries to be adapted into a feature film was Anne Frank's, in the 1959 production directed by George Stevens. With the restoration and publication of Anne's original, uncensored diary, the 2001 two-part television mini-series adapted from Melissa Müller's book *Anne Frank: The Biography* (2014) offers Anne's candid self-reflections about her developing sexuality and tense relationships with her mother and other occupants of the Annex that her father Otto Frank edited out of the first published version.

**Gender and Sexuality as Biopic Subjects**

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include Loshitsky (1997), Doneson (2001), Insdorf (2003), Bartov (2005), Hirsch (2004), Haggith (2005),

Some Holocaust films dramatize aspects of the Holocaust that had previously been neglected because the subject was assumed to be offensive or marginal or because their film style was considered less accessible for many viewers. For example, *Bent* (1997), directed by Sean Mathias, was the first feature film to dramatize the Nazi persecution of gays. In addition to being filmed in black and white and directed and acted in a stylized, non-realist form, it offered little action or heroism and ended on a bleak if deeply felt note. *Bent* drew a very small audience but in the intervening years, since the subject of gays has become more mainstream in all public media, the film has gained a wide audience.[55]

The 1999 German film, *Aimée and Jaguar*, directed by Max Färberböck was a landmark production for several reasons.

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[55] The film was based on the 1979 play of the same name by Martin Sherman, who also wrote the screenplay. *Bent w*on the Best Feature Film award in the 1998 Torino International Gay & Lesbian Film Festival. The (1999) documentary *Paragraph 175* explains Nazi laws against gay men. For further study of gay men in the Third Reich, see Seifert (2003).

Set in wartime Berlin, in vividly dramatic color, the film dramatizes a love relationship between a German woman and a Jewish woman. Lilly Wust is a pure Aryan Nazi whose husband is serving in the German army; because she is the mother of four Aryan boys, she has been awarded the Reich's Mother's Cross. Felice Schragenheim is Jewish and a lesbian and therefore threatened twice over. Their relationship would have been forbidden on several grounds, including the charge of *rassenschande* (sexual relations between an Aryan and non-Aryan). The film was based on the book by the Austrian-Jewish writer Erica Fischer, whose sources include Felice's letters and poems, Lilly's letters and diary, as well as interviews with Lilly and friends of Felice's who survived. Felice did not survive incarceration in Bergen-Belsen. *Aimée and Jaguar* enhances our knowledge of the Holocaust by dramatizing one of its key

elements: women's gender roles and sexual relationships under the Third Reich.[56]

**Filming the Perspective of Children in the Holocaust**

The perspective of children during the Holocaust includes those targeted for murder, those who were complicit with the Germans, and those who understand how despite their innocence, they bear the responsibility of witnessing. All three groups are depicted by French director Louis Malle in his autobiographical films *Lacombe Lucien* (1974) and *Revoir les Enfants* (*Goodbye Children* 1987). Based on his recollections of attending a Catholic boarding school during the Nazi occupation of France, the film portrays his development from innocence to revelation as he is shown befriending a Jewish boy being sheltered by the priests, recognizing his friend's devotion to his Jewish identity, and witnessing his betrayal and capture. The film attests to the moral

[56] Studies of women in the Holocaust include Koonz (1987), Ofer and Weitzman (1998), Hedgepeth and Saidel (2010).

responsibility borne by all onlookers to Holocaust events, regardless of age or innocence.

The 2014 German-Polish-French film *Run Boy Run,* directed by Pepe Danquart, is adapted from the 2000 novel *Run, Boy, Run* by Uri Orlev and is based on the life of Yoram Fridman (Srulik in the film), who escaped from the Warsaw Ghetto in 1942 as German troops were rounding up its Jews. Beginning when the boy is eight years old, the film tracks his relentless efforts to stay alive throughout the rest of the war as he traipses across the Polish countryside, from farm to farm, from icy winters to blistering summers, encountering occasional kindness but more often, he was greeted with indifference or betrayal. Like the 1991 film *Europa Europa,* directed by Agnieszka Holland, *Run Boy Run* is narrated from a boy's perspective as he struggles not only to live, but to save his Jewish identity as his life is threatened because of it.[57]

[57] On this film and fiction about boys on the run during the Holocaust, see Lassner (2020).

*Europa Europa* is based on the 1989 autobiography of Solomon Perel (Solly and Solek in the film), a German Jewish boy who on the evening of his Bar Mitzvah, escapes the deadly pogrom of *Kristallnacht* (Night of Broken Glass) on November 9, 1938. Like Srulik, Solly's attempts to conceal his Jewish identity are constantly threatened because a circumcised penis would prove not only their Jewish identity, but that they embody Jewish racial and sexual depravity. Narrated entirely from the boys' perspective, both films depict the boys' struggle to retain their Jewish identity, which each boy had promised his father before escaping. Although Solly is saved by his successful disguise as a Nazi hero, he reveals the agony of his dual identity when he tries to reconstruct his foreskin and then when he rides a trolley through the ghetto straining for a glimpse of his parents.

Srulik's dual identity is put to a conclusive test at the end of the war when a representative of the Jewish Agency, on a mission to locate surviving Jewish children, finds the boy living happily at the Polish farm that has sheltered him. The agent charges Srulik with the responsibility of acknowledging his Jewish identity and

returning to his place in the remaining Jewish community. When he is taken back to the village of his birth and peeks into the window of his father's shop, he recalls a Jewish lullaby that triggers his memory and desire for a Jewish life. Both films feature epilogues that show Solly and Srulik as elderly, but robustly asserting their Jewish identities as fulfilled in their children and grandchildren. Although these epilogues evoke a sense of sentimental nostalgia, they serve as reminders to Srulik and Solly and to audiences that these are moments of memorializing those who were lost.[58]

**Perpetrators**

The primary focus of film biopics depicting perpetrators has been their leader, Adolf Hitler. And yet, as Holocaust scholar Alvin H. Rosenfeld (1985) argues, "no representations of Hitler, highbrow or low, seem able adequately to present the man or satisfactorily to explain him" (xx). Despite this serious shortcoming, Holocaust film expert Lawrence Baron (2005)

[58] Śliwowska (1998) presents child survivors' testimonies.

demonstrates that "public interest in Hitler has not diminished" (68). Some of the films representing Hitler try to account for the background that motivated his animus against the Jews and other victim groups, such as *The Death of Adolf Hitler* (1972). *Our Hitler: A Film from Germany* (1978) uses an experimental technique to acknowledge that there is no single explanation for Hitler's character and cruel policies. As described by Baron (2005), *Our Hitler i*s

> an inventive pastiche of different actors articulating Hitler's opinions and puppets symbolizing the myriad of personas Germans project onto him: the common man, the military genius, the Wagnerian hero, the tragic prince. (71).

**Resisters**

Although wartime resistance is typically considered to be an armed struggle, as in the example of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto uprising, given the Nazis' broad reach and countless forms of brutal oppression, resisters responded to their specific circumstances in many different ways. Examples include secretly observing the Jewish holidays, women's emotionally supportive groups in the camps, keeping diaries to bear witness, escape

attempts, and most famously, blowing up Crematorium four at Auschwitz.[59] All of the films discussed above illuminate how survival in the Holocaust involved psychological as well as physical endurance to resist being exterminated or to demonstrate their humanity in opposition to Nazi barbarism. Biopic films that illustrate various types of resistance include the following.

*Out of the Ashes* (2003), based on the memoir *I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz* (2018) tells the story of Gisella Perl, a Hungarian obstetrician who was deported to Auschwitz where Josef Mengele, the camp's sadistic doctor, forced her to assist him in his experiments. In secret, agonizing over the moral dilemma she faced, she helped over a thousand women by performing abortions and infanticide. She made her decision knowing that otherwise, both mother and child would be murdered. Perl

[59] In Auschwitz-Birkenau, a group of *Sonderkommando*, those men forced to deceive prisoners into the gas chambers and who operated the ovens, enlisted the help of several teenage girl prisoners to gather gunpowder. On October 7, 1944, they succeeded in blowing up the one crematorium, but all were caught and executed. www.holocaustresearchproject.org/revolt/sonderevolt.html

survived and immigrated to the United States but was accused of choosing to assist Mengele. She was ultimately acquitted and eventually made her home in Israel where she worked for many years at Shaare Zedek hospital in Jerusalem.

*The White Rose* (1981) directed by Michael Verhoeven, and *Sophie Scholl: The Final Days* (2005), directed by Marc Rothemund, dramatize the story of the student resistance group the White Rose. Dedicated to non-violence, the group was caught distributing their anti-Nazi leaflets at their university. Sophie and her brother were declared guilty of high treason and executed in February 1943. The film *Korczak* (1990), directed by Andrzej Wajda, details the selfless heroism of another active resister, Janusz Korczak, the Director of a Jewish children's orphanage who accompanied the children to their deaths in the Warsaw Ghetto. *Hanna's War* (1988), directed by Menachem Golan, is based in part on the diary of young Hungarian Jewish woman, Hanna Senesh. The film focuses on Hanna's tragic adventure of ignoring her orders to help fallen paratroopers behind German lines and instead, fatefully attempting to rescue her mother in Budapest.

Hanna was arrested, tortured, and killed by the Hungarian Fascist regime.[60]

Other films of resistance to the Third Reich include: *Wallenberg: A Hero's Story* (1985), profiles the Swedish diplomat who saved countless Hungarian Jews and who was arrested and probably killed by the Soviets at the end of the war. *Bonhoeffer: Agent of Grace* (2003), is the story of Dietrich Bonhoeffer who was a German Protestant theologian who helped Jews escape from Germany and took part in the plot to assassinate Hitler. He was ultimately captured and hanged by the Nazis.

One of the important contributions of biographical Holocaust films is that their representations of actual people individualize the otherwise overwhelming numbers of those who were deported, tortured, and killed for no other reason than to satisfy the hatred targeting their identities. Dramatizing the innocence of all Holocaust victims, these films offer a varied range of age groups, gender and sexual identities, national origins, and

[60] For further discussion, see Lawrence Baron (1999).

experiences. They also represent close-up, complex portraits that portray the humanity of people the Nazis sought to dehumanize.

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Olivia Montecchi provided an overview of what inspired them to recorded two songs dedicated to the memory of those lives lost in the Holocaust.

**I Never Saw Another Butterfly**

*Olivia Montecchi*

Studying the Holocaust is profoundly important because it reveals the depths of human cruelty and the extraordinary resilience of survivors who rebuilt their lives amid unimaginable loss. Through stories like those of Second-Generation Survivor Deborah Leonard's parents, who created community and opportunity in Displaced Persons camps before thriving in America, and Mitchell Winthrop's endurance at Auschwitz-Birkenau into old age, we witness how bravery and adaptability triumph over hatred. These accounts provide vital perspective on our own struggles, inspiring greater empathy, critical thinking, and a commitment to being upstanders against prejudice and denial today. By confronting this history, through survivor testimonies, liberator recollections, and the fight against ongoing antisemitism,

we learn to combat racism and hate in our communities, honor the victims, and ensure that such atrocities are never repeated.

My work with Dr. Adele-Marie started in her Honors U.S. History from 1877 class. I recorded a movement from *Quartet from the End of Time* by Olivier Messiaen on clarinet, viola, and keyboard. In her History of the Holocaust class, I did an honors project making a recording of Lori Laitman's *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlALL0kUxOA) movements 1 and 2 arranged for clarinet and keyboard. I grew so much doing these music projects and am so grateful to Dr. Adele-Marie for encouraging me to push myself creatively and emotionally. Recording these pieces synthesized the depth of tragedy of the survivors I read about and allowed me to honor them and carry their memory with me.

**I Never Saw Another Butterfly mvmt 1 and 2 Performed by Olivia Montecchi**

Continuing our examination of music and the Holocaust, next, Susan Eischeid's examination of the women's orchestra of Auschwitz-Birkenau continues the cultural analysis of the Holocaust, through the lens of gender. In this essay, Eischeid presents a short overview of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Women's Orchestra. Utilizing memoirs, interviews, and other archival resources and texts, we learn about the personnel, function, repertoire, leadership, and heroes of the orchestra, all within the greater context of the largest concentration and death camp of the Third Reich. The essay closes with the liquidation of the orchestra and ultimate fate of the musicians. A brief discussion about an ongoing controversy in remembrance is included, as are recent words of one of the last living survivors.

**Courage, Resilience, and Artistry in the Land of Death: The Women's Orchestra of Auschwitz-Birkenau**

*Susan J. Eischeid*

In many ways, music was an essential part of the Hitler's regime. Music was used for propaganda, for glorification, for discipline, and for entertainment. It was also abused in profane

ways including the exploitation of musicians and composers for Nazi self-aggrandizement, the facilitation of hard labor details, and for lulling victims into a false sense of security before murder in the gas chambers.

As Hitler's implementation of The Final Solution progressed, music and musical activity were evident in all stages of the Holocaust. Many of the ghettos and camps of the Third Reich had performing groups, composers wrote songs and other music expressing the circumstances in which they found themselves, and music was integrated into daily routines of discipline and death by Nazi officials.

All of these things provided a means of survival for musicians and, in some cases, spiritual hope. However, after the war others were tortured with thoughts of guilt, dismay, and sorrow. The use of music at a place like Auschwitz was, for many, an abomination.[61]

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[61] Szymon Laks, *Music of Another World* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1989), 5. See also Zofia Cykowiak, (interviews with Susan Eischeid, June 3, 2003 & May 15 2004, Krakow, Poland).

There were varied musical activities in the Auschwitz complex in southwestern Poland, including men's orchestras in Auschwitz I, Auschwitz II Birkenau, and Auschwitz III Monowitz. Auschwitz-Birkenau was also home to the only women's orchestra in the Nazi camp system.

The women's orchestra at Auschwitz-Birkenau was formed in the spring of 1943 by two high-ranking Nazi officials; SS *Hauptsturmführer* Franz Hössler and *Oberaufseherin* (Head Overseer) of the women's camp, Maria Mandl. Both were cognizant of the successful men's orchestras and believed the formation of a unique women's orchestra would bring them added status and respect.[62]

After receiving permission to move ahead, recruitment began among the prison population. By early summer a nucleus of 20 musicians had been formed and a conductor named Zofia Czajkowska appointed. Over the next several months performers

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[62] Zofia Cykowiak, "Zarys historii kobiecej orkiestry w Oświęcimiu-Brzezinka" (An Outline History of the Women's Orchestra in Oświęcim-Brzezinka), Krakow, 1985, nr rejestracyjny 44527, Państwowe Muzuem Auschwitz-Birkenau w Oświęcimiu (APMO). Archival Material. See also Helena Dunicz Niwińska,(interview with Susan Eischeid, Krakow, Poland, June 10, 2003).

were added as the orchestra increased in size and status. At its height, in 1944, the orchestra comprised approximately 45 musicians and several copyists.[63]

Due to the huge influx of transports into the camp, instruments were readily accessible. At first, the orchestra struggled. Most of the musicians were young and inexperienced, many teenagers. Although Czajkowska had provided a starting point, she was not a particularly inspired artist and initial concerts were not of high quality.[64]

The struggles of playing under the appalling conditions and stresses of the death camp and daily seeing arriving transports and mass murder on a heretofore inconceivable scale, made the production of beautiful music almost impossible for the young musicians. To add to the stress, everyone knew that if the level of performance did not improve, all could be re-assigned to hard labor or to death.

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[63] Helena Dunicz Niwińska, *One of the Girls in the Band* (Oświęcim, Poland: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2014), 171-176.

[64] Susan Eischeid, 2016. *The Truth about Fania Fénelon and the Women's Orchestra of Auschwitz-Birkenau.* London: Palgrave Macmillan. 7.

The savior of the orchestra arrived in the person of a woman named Alma Rosé. Rosé was an established artist, conductor and virtuoso violinist who had been deported into the Auschwitz I camp. She came from a prominent family of musicians – her father was the respected violinist Arnold Rosé and her uncle, the esteemed composer Gustav Mahler. Mandl was notified of Alma's presence and arranged to have her transferred to Birkenau to conduct the struggling women's orchestra.

In a herculean effort and utilizing all of the talent and strength of spirit she possessed, Alma created a viable orchestra. Molding and teaching the musicians, many of whom had little if any previous training, and strictly regulating rehearsals, she rose above the conditions of the death camp and began to present concerts of high quality.

The orchestration of the orchestra was unusual, consisting of strings, guitar, flute, recorder, a few singers, percussion, cello, double bass, mandolin, and accordion. Alma arranged standard orchestral repertoire for the resources they had. Germanic composers like Mozart, Schumann and Schubert were performed

as well as more popular selections, German marches, and military songs.[65]

Although the musicians struggled with the omnipresent hunger in the camp, they were also permitted a barracks of their own which was heated for rehearsals and provided a separate living area in the back. Conditions were primitive but infinitely better than those of the prison population at large. Some of this was due to the SS, who did not want to come in close contact with louse ridden individuals at concerts so permitted the musicians to keep clean. Despite this, many of the women did suffer with maladies common to the camp such as typhus, bacterial infections, and scabies.[66]

The young performers endured long rehearsals, often extending all day, and presented weekly concerts in both the camp hospital and in and outside of the Sauna building. Another of their major responsibilities was to play at the entrance of the camp while

[65] Helena Dunicz Niwińska, "Truth and Fantasy," *Pro Memoria* Nr. 3-4 (Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1996), 65.

[66] Cykowiak, An Outline History, APMO.

slave labor details were marched out in the morning and back again at night.

Sadly, Alma Rosé, the guiding light of the orchestra, did not survive the war. On April 5, 1944, she died under suspicious circumstances, most probably from botulism.[67] After her death the orchestra floundered and ultimately was dispersed as the camp was liquidated. The musicians were deported to various other camps including Bergen-Belsen, Ravensbrück and Neustadt-Glewe. Although a few of the women died, most survived the war - largely due to their position in the women's orchestra and the efforts of Alma Rosé.

In the years following liberation survivors of the orchestra struggled to build new lives after the devastation of the Holocaust. Few spoke of their experiences in Auschwitz-Birkenau. Then, in 1976, a singer named Fania Fénelon published her memoir of the orchestra. Titled "*Sursis pour l'orc*hestre" (Reprieve for the Orchestra) it was shortly thereafter released in English, first as

[67] Richard Newman, and Karen Kirtley. 2000. *Alma Rosé: Vienna to Auschwitz*. Portland: Amadeus Press. 305-306.

"The Musicians of Auschwitz," and finally as "Playing for Time."[68]

Written in a popular and often salacious style, the book was an immediate success. Quickly translated into multiple languages it sold hundreds of thousands of copies all over the world. In 1980 *Playing for Time* was made into a television movie which aired on CBS to great acclaim and occasional controversy and continues to stream on Netflix today.

*Playing for Time* was viewed with horror by other survivors of the orchestra, who were appalled by Fénelon's memoir and her often embellished and manufactured prose. Most egregiously they were upset by Fénelon's inaccurate portrayal of Alma Rosé, the inflation of her own importance and role in the orchestra, and the mean-spirited and devastating portrayal of her former friends. From its inception the other women banded together and fought to draw attention to the problems and

[68] Fania Fénelon, *Sursis pour l'orchestre*, (Paris: Stock Publishers, 1976). Fania Fénelon, *The Musicians of Auschwitz,* first English edition, (London: Billing and Sons Ltd., 1977). Fania Fénelon, *Playing for Time*, (New York: Berkley Books, 1977).

mischaracterizations in the memoir. Their concerns were mostly dismissed or ignored and, decades later, *Playing for Time* is still often accepted as the truth of the orchestra.[69]

Thankfully, several of the other women subsequently wrote their own memoirs or consented to personal interviews, and from these we can draw a better and more honest picture of the orchestra.[70] One survivor, Fanny Korenblum Birkenwald, stressed throughout her life that "We had remained human beings and for someone who has lived a life in the camps, it is a great thing to have retained one's dignity. I feel proud to have been part of the orchestra." (F. Korenblum Birkenwald & A. Lasker-Wallfisch, personal communication, 2014)

In 2018 one of the last surviving musicians, Anita Lasker-Wallfisch, was invited to speak at the Bundestag when the German

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[69] Susan Eischeid. 2016. *The Truth about Fania Fénelon and the Women's Orchestra of Auschwitz-Birkenau.* London: Palgrave Macmillan. 3.

[70] Anita Lasker-Wallfisch. 1996. *Inherit the Truth*. New York: St. Martin's Press. See also Niwińska, Helena Dunicz. 2014. *One of the Girls in the Band*. Oświęcim: Auschwitz Birkenau State Museum. See also Olewski, Rachela Zelmanowicz. 2009. *Crying is Forbidden Here!* Tel-Aviv: Olewski Family. See also Daëron, Michael. 2000. *Bach in Auschwitz* (Film Documentary). New York: Winstar TV and Video.

Parliament commemorated the Holocaust shortly after the 73rd anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

> Sometimes, I think that the orchestra in Auschwitz was a kind of microcosm, a society in miniature that we can learn from. Many years after these events, I am in close contact with one of these other prisoners, a Polish woman, a pure Aryan who played the violin in the orchestra… We still have problems finding a common language, but we talk and write to each other in English. In short, we have become friends and have found that we have far more in common than that which divides us. Perhaps this can serve as an example for today's problems. Talk to each other. Build bridges. (Lasker-Wallfisch, 2018)

**Recommended Resources if you would like to learn more about the Auschwitz-Birkenau Women's Orchestra or Music in the Holocaust:**

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**Unit Nine: Resistance and Upstanders**

## Heroes of the Holocaust: Resistance and Upstanders

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

Heroes often do not have names. Some heroes have names but are unknown because they did not want fame or glory. Some heroes become known because they people they helped save make sure that they are known. People fought back against the Nazis in any way that they could. Resistance took on many forms, including armed resistance. Non-Jews also aided in resistance. Ordinary people within Germany resisted, from plotting assassination attempts to hiding children. An excellent place to start with understanding armed resistance in the ghettos and camps comes from this reading from Echoes & Reflections: Armed Resistance in Ghettos and Camps; see also Rescuers and Non-Jewish Resistance.

Upstanders were individuals who risked their lives to save Jews in Europe and North Africa during the Holocaust. Resistance against the Nazi regime manifested in various forms, showcasing the bravery and resilience of those who opposed tyranny. Clandestine religious ceremonies and underground education

became essential means of preserving culture and identity, while the smuggling of food and clothing into ghettos illustrated a steadfast commitment to supporting one another in dire circumstances.

Notable acts of defiance included the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich in Czechoslovakia and the formation of Jewish and Slavic partisan groups, reflecting both organized and individual efforts to resist oppression. In Denmark, an extraordinary operation managed to rescue nearly 8,000 Jews, underscoring a national commitment to aid those in danger. Similarly, figures like Raoul Wallenberg and Irena Sendler risked their lives to save thousands, using protective documents, false identities, and other methods to shield vulnerable people from persecution.

Chiune Sugihara, a Japanese diplomat in Kaunas, Lithuania, issued transit visas to Jews, enabling them to escape through Japanese territories. Each act of resistance and rescue, from the well-known to the lesser known, contributed to a complex tapestry of defiance against the Nazi regime. Resistance during the

Holocaust took many forms, including acts of courage by individuals who chose to help Jewish people escape Nazi persecution. One example that is often overlooked is the work of Philippine President Manuel L. Quezon, who helped provide refuge for European Jews fleeing the Nazis. Consider also the testimony of Lotte Hershfield, a Holocaust survivor who was among the Jewish refugees who found safety in the Philippines. Her survival shows the human impact of these rescue efforts and reminds us that resistance was not only carried out through armed movements or political organizations, but also through individual acts of compassion and the decision to protect fellow humans.

Quezon, along with other individuals who supported these efforts, worked to open the Philippines to Jewish refugees at a time when many countries were restricting immigration. Although not all planned rescue efforts could be completed, the refuge provided by the Philippines helped save more than a thousand Jewish refugees. Hershfield's testimony provides a personal connection to this history and demonstrates the lasting importance of remembering those who chose to act against persecution

(Hershfield 2020; United Nations 2013). But what motivated people to help rescue and save lives?

Motivations for becoming involved in helping Jews and others targeted by the Nazis and their collaborators varied. Why would people risk their lives to help? In his essay, survivor Ralph Rehbock cited several people, some total strangers, who helped his family survive. Upstanders were the opposite of bystanders. They acted. They resisted; they saved lives. They got involved. Upstanders rescued Jews, made up false papers to help Jews escape, and acted because they had to. Irena Sendler, a member of the Polish Underground Resistance, saved 2,500 children. In Hungary, Charles Lutz, the Swiss Vice-Consul, saved over 60,000 Jews by providing safe places to hide and papers of safe conduct. The Japanese diplomat Chiune Sugihara and his wife saved thousands of Lithuanian Jews, issuing them visas.

The largest German-led protest against the Nazis took place on 27 February 1943. The last of the German Jews were being rounded up, arrested, and marked for immediate death. However, their wives and other women (and men) stood up to the Nazis to

prevent their loved ones and friends from being deported. They were successful and all of the people they fought for were saved Students can learn more here: Deportation of the last German Jews and the Rosenstraße protest in Berlin and also here: Rosenstrasse Protest: Personal Testimonies (click on any name) The Holocaust, despite centuries of antisemitism was not inevitable.

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# The Holocaust in North Africa and Arab and Muslim Upstanders

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

According to Teaching Tolerance, “Many religions have things in common. At the same time, each is unique. In the shared category, Islam, like Christianity and Judaism, descends from the first five books of the Bible. That is why some people refer to members of all three religions as ‘followers of the Book’.” Further, Teaching Tolerance emphasizes that education about religious difference can help challenge stereotypes and reduce bias. Ameena Jandali of the Islamic Networks Group similarly reminds us that in Islam, “killing an innocent person is considered to be the greatest crime,” a principle often invoked in discussions of moral responsibility during periods of mass violence. (Islamic Networks Group n.d.)

These interpretive frameworks invite students to consider how individuals from Arab and Muslim-majority societies, alongside others sometimes placed themselves in extreme danger to save Jewish lives during the Holocaust. Such actions occurred

within a broader historical reality in which millions of people across occupied Europe and North Africa remained passive, constrained, or unable to intervene. Historians often refer to such individuals as bystanders.

Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 demonstrated the limitations of international efforts to stop fascist aggression. Although the League of Nations condemned the invasion, meaningful intervention never occurred. Ethiopian civilians suffered extensively under Fascist Italy's occupation. The failure of the international community to act in Ethiopia foreshadowed later inaction as Nazi Germany expanded across Europe and intensified its persecution of Jews and other groups targeted by the regime. (Baer 1967; Bosworth 2006; Evans 2005)

War, genocide, and the Holocaust in North Africa constitutes an essential but often underrepresented dimension of the Second World War. In Axis-occupied territories such as Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya, Jewish communities were subjected to antisemitic legislation, forced labor, property confiscation, internment, and in some cases violence and murder. Under Vichy

administration and German military influence, Nazi racial policy extended beyond continental Europe into the Mediterranean world. Although the scale and implementation of persecution varied by region, North African Jewish communities were nonetheless incorporated into the broader structures of wartime antisemitic governance. (Holocaust: A Call to Conscience 2009)

While North African Jewish communities were subjected to these systems of persecution, responses to Nazi occupation and Vichy rule also emerged in the form of rescue and protection carried out by individuals and communities operating under extreme constraint. This broader historical context is further supported in educational syntheses of the period. As one example notes, “The Nazi occupation of France and the establishment of the anti-Semitic Vichy regime brought North African Jews into the orbit of persecution, including forced labor, discriminatory laws, and the disruption of communal life.” (Facing History & Ourselves n.d.)

Within this system, responses to persecution were uneven and varied. In North Africa and across parts of the Mediterranean,

Jews and non-Jews sometimes engaged in acts of assistance that included sheltering refugees, warning families of raids, protecting property, and providing informal humanitarian aid under conditions of occupation.

These responses were not limited to individual action. In Albania, Jewish survival was shaped in part by the cultural ethic of Besa, a code of honor emphasizing protection of guests and strangers. This contributed to widespread sheltering of Jewish refugees during the war and illustrates how local cultural frameworks could shape rescue behavior on a community level. Similarly, in occupied France, the Grand Mosque of Paris has been associated with efforts to provide refuge and documentation assistance to individuals at risk of deportation. These cases demonstrate that rescue could emerge through communal, religious, and institutional structures as well as individual initiative. (Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre 2022; Washington Institute for Near East Policy 2006)

Alongside these regional examples, diplomatic intervention also played a role in specific cases of rescue. One frequently cited

figure is Abdol Hossein Sardari, who served as an Iranian consular official in occupied France. Sardari used his diplomatic position to challenge Nazi racial classifications and intervene on behalf of Iranian Jews living under occupation. His actions contributed to the protection of thousands of individuals and illustrate how bureaucratic and diplomatic channels could, in limited circumstances, be used to resist aspects of Nazi persecution. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum n.d.; Washington Institute for Near East Policy 2006)

Taken together, these examples from Albania, occupied France, and diplomatic networks demonstrate the varied forms rescue could take under extreme conditions. While each case is historically distinct, they collectively highlight the complexity of human behavior under occupation and genocide.

Within the broader framework of systematic destruction, it is also necessary to examine instances of rescue and resistance. Understanding genocide requires attention not only to its mechanisms and scale, but also to the range of human responses

that emerged under conditions of extreme violence and occupation. (Satloff 2006; Holocaust: A Call to Conscience 2009)

Documentary and testimonial sources further reinforce these patterns of persecution, rescue, and resistance across North Africa and Europe, expanding the evidentiary base beyond written archival records alone. (Facing History & Ourselves n.d.; Holocaust: A Call to Conscience 2009)

The historiography of these experiences also reveals significant gaps in the archival record. As Nina Lichtenstein has argued, Sephardic and North African Jewish experiences remain underrepresented in Holocaust testimony collections and scholarly narratives. Drawing on large-scale repositories of survivor testimony, including those preserved by institutions such as the USC Shoah Foundation, she identifies a persistent imbalance in whose experiences have been recorded and preserved within Holocaust scholarship. (Lichtenstein 2017)

This is not only a question of numbers but also of historical visibility. In her study of Gisèle Braka, a Sephardic Jewish woman active in resistance efforts in Algeria, Lichtenstein highlights both

the diversity of women's wartime roles and the challenges of recovering fragmented or marginalized narratives. Braka's experiences as a resistance participant, Red Cross nurse, and later advocate for children's rights illustrate the complex trajectories of survival and postwar engagement that characterized many North African Jewish women's lives. (Lichtenstein 2017)

The Holocaust was one of the greatest government-sanctioned crimes against humanity in modern history. Genocide, as perpetrated by the Nazis, resulted in the systematic murder of six million Jews and five million others between 1933 and 1945, along with their collaborators. Genocide is defined as the intentional destruction of all or part of a racial, ethnic, religious, or national group. Under Nazi rule, Jewish communities across Europe and North Africa were placed in extreme danger. (Holocaust: A Call to Conscience 2009)

The Nazi system of persecution was deliberate and ideologically driven. Jews were first subjected to exclusion and segregation, followed by dispossession and ultimately mass murder. This process was enabled through bureaucracy, industrial

cooperation, and widespread international failure to intervene. At the same time, there were individuals who resisted or acted to save lives under extraordinary conditions of risk.

These stories of rescue and resistance also raise a critical historical question: why did so many individuals and governments fail to act? Those who did not intervene are commonly referred to as bystanders, and their role remains essential to understanding how the Holocaust and genocide became possible.

Students often ask, why did people not leave? The survivor essays contained in this textbook explore this question in greater depth. Many individuals and families faced significant barriers to emigration, including restrictive immigration quotas, financial limitations, family obligations, uncertainty about the future, and the hope that conditions would improve. Others did not wish to abandon their homes, businesses, communities, or loved ones until it was too late. Once Nazi occupation began and Jewish life was increasingly controlled through German administrative structures, new forms of coercion emerged. One example was the establishment of Jewish Councils (*Judenräte*) in both Germany and

German-occupied territories beginning in 1939, particularly following the invasion of Poland. These councils placed Jewish community leadership under direct Nazi authority and forced them to implement German orders within the ghettos. Jewish Councils (*Judenräte*) operated under extreme coercion during Nazi occupation.

As described by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, these councils were required to implement German orders within ghettos, including compiling lists of Jewish residents for deportation, while also attempting to provide basic community services under impossible conditions. Their actions remain one of the most complex and debated aspects of Holocaust history.

These circumstances raise a broader question about decision-making under persecution. Holocaust scholar Lawrence L. Langer uses the term “choiceless choices” to describe situations in which individuals were forced to choose between options that were all devastating, with no morally “good” outcome available. Their circumstances differed fundamentally from those of perpetrators, collaborators, and many bystanders, who generally

retained a greater capacity to exercise agency and make moral decisions. (Langer 1982; Langer 1991)

Primo Levi's concept of the "gray zone" extends this discussion further. As a survivor of Auschwitz, Primo Levi argued that the concentration camp system deliberately created situations in which the boundaries between victim, perpetrator, and intermediary became blurred. In this environment, prisoner functionaries (Kapos), among others, often occupied morally compromised positions shaped by coercion, survival, and violence. Rather than eliminating morality entirely, Levi shows how extreme systems distort and complicate moral judgment, making simple interpretations inadequate. (Levi 1989)

Taken together, these perspectives, the *Judenräte*, "choiceless choices," and the "gray zone" help students understand that the Holocaust cannot be reduced to simple categories of decision-making. Instead, they force us to confront how human behavior changes under conditions of extreme oppression and systematic violence.

Further, Langer argued that many victims of the Holocaust were confronted with what he termed “choiceless choices,” situations in which no viable moral or practical alternatives existed. Their circumstances differed fundamentally from those of perpetrators, collaborators, and many bystanders, who generally retained a greater capacity to exercise agency and make moral decisions. (Langer 1982; Langer 1991)

The essays that follow examine a range of upstanders and resistance movements during the Holocaust, encouraging students to consider the choices individuals made when confronted with persecution, violence, and injustice.

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The powerful story of upstander Janusz Korczak is presented here by Adam Yunis. It was a speech written by Adam Yunis and presented to the Polish American Medical Society by Kelley Szany, Vice President of Education and Exhibitions IMHEC, in October 2019.

## The Life of Janusz Korczak

*Adam Yunis*

Janusz Korczak represents all the creativity, talent, empathy and ambition to make the world a better place that was lost in the tragedy of the Holocaust. But Korczak also represents courage, the courage to put others before yourself, the courage to not abandon your beliefs, your friends, your children. Writing in the Warsaw Ghetto, Korczak writes of staking his life on a single card, the care of destitute children. Korczak is known for his actions during this time in the Ghetto, where he heroically cared for the children in his orphanage, but his actions throughout his life display a profound sense of moral duty to help not only individuals, but society. What strikes us most from Kozak's life is

an intense belief in humanity and his message that we cannot let our world, our society, fail our children.

Janusz Korczak was born Henryk Goldszmit on July 22nd, 1878 or 1879 to a well off, assimilated Jewish family in Warsaw, Poland. Korczak writings tell us of his own shock on learning as a five-year-old that he was a Jew from a janitor's son, who threatened him with a dark place much like Hell if he did not do his bidding. We do not know if his father, Józef, a lawyer, took him to synagogue or had him bar mitzvahed, but he passed on to him the aspirations of his own father, a physician, to liberate the Jews from their segregated lives and propel them into Polish culture. This belief in a strong bond between Jews and Poles, that one could be both Jewish and Polish and not sacrifice either identity would be a driving force in his life. Korczak states in his memoir "I pursue in life that which my father strove for and for which my grandfather tortured himself for many years. "This belief in one common humanity would be a defining principle in his work as an educator.

When Korczak father died after a long illness in 1896, the family was left without a source of income. Korczak was forced to be the sole breadwinner for his mother, sister, and grandmother. Children became Korczak savior in his youth, just as he would become theirs. He forgot his own anxieties while tutoring pampered, rich boys, much like he had been, in order to help support his family, and in the process developed some of the creative strategies that he would later use in his own orphanages. This close family environment and the death of his father by illness undoubtedly influenced his awareness to the plight of societal problems and his early pursuit of medicine. Korczak studied medicine at the University of Warsaw from 1898-1904. During this time, he began writing professionally, using the name we now know today, Janusz Korczak, a name he chose from one of his favorite Polish novels.

Korczak was immediately successful, writing in several newspapers and publishing well received children's books. In medicine he specialized in pediatrics but immediately after graduating was drafted into the Russian army and was posted in

East Asia. Even during those war years, Korczak was always himself, always sensitive to the fate of children. In his memoirs he recalls buying a beating rod off a sadistic Chinese teacher in one of the villages – it would later serve as a skipping rope for children at his Orphans' Home. He then worked for Bersohns and Baumans Children's Hospital in Warsaw from 1905-1912. During this time, he continued to write children's books and books for adults on raising their children and became well known in Warsaw society for his successful private practice in medicine and as an influential author.

Both as a doctor and a writer, Korczak was drawn to the world of the child. He worked in a Jewish children's hospital and took groups of children to summer camps, and in 1908 he began to work with orphans. By working with orphans, he met Stefania Wilczynska, a superb educator, and the daughter of a wealthy Jewish family who dedicated her life to the care of orphans and greatly influenced Korczak and his career as an educator. It was the work with orphans and with the help of a great mind as

Stefania that led him to open his own orphanage, one where he could implement his own progressive ideas.

In 1912, Korczak and Stefania opened *Dom Sierot* at Krochmalna 92 street, a Jewish orphanage with a hundred boys and girls, ages seven to fourteen. Members of Warsaw society had been amazed that the famous Janusz Korczak would give up his literary career and successful medical practice to take care of poor children. They did not understand that medicine was no longer enough for this visionary pediatrician. “The road I have chosen toward my goal is neither the shortest nor the most convenient,” he told an interviewer. “But it is the best for me because it is my own. I found it not without effort or pain.” Part of the difficulty in making the decision lay in assuring himself that he was not betraying medicine. He reasoned that medicine is involved only with curing the sick child, but he had a chance to cure the whole child in running an orphanage. As a scientist he could use the orphanage as a laboratory for clinical observation and as an educator, he could be, in his own words, “sculptor of the child’s soul.” The children’s republic he built was designed as a just

community where its young citizens would have their own parliament, newspaper, and court of peers.

Korczak was a pioneer in what we now call moral education. Central to his ideas in his orphanage and in his ideas of childhood development was his Declaration of Children's Rights. That children have a right to be loved, respected and given optimal conditions in which to grow. They have a right to be taken seriously and that children are not people of tomorrow but people of today. Korczak believed that "the unknown person inside each child is the hope for the future." It was for this reason children could be as religious as they wanted and allowed to pursue creative outlets as they wish.

As a form of tonic, Pan Doctor, as the orphans called him, devised ingenious strategies – his "pedagogical arsenal" – to help his charges strengthen their will. One favorite was the make-believe gambling casino he set up for them to bet on how many fights they would have each week, until they were motivated to have none. However, he considered the children's court of peers the cornerstone of his system because it would show the children

that there could be justice even in an unjust world. Rather than retaliating a child could call out “I sue you,” and sign his or her name on the list of court cases that were heard each Saturday morning. Five children with no cases against them that week were the judges, who followed a Code of Laws that Korczak had drawn up, with forgiveness being the usual resolution to a court case. Behind Korczak creative techniques was a keen psychological understanding of children that came from years of practice, experience that most doctors who worked with adults did not have. Korczak once told a friend “I am a doctor by training, a pedagogue by chance, a writer by passion, and a psychologist by necessity.”

Korczak was also striving to fulfill the goals of his father and grandfather and to reinforce the bridge between Jewish and Catholics. He made Polish the language in his Jewish orphanage, co-directed a second orphanage in Warsaw for poor Catholic children and wrote humorous books on his experiences in both Jewish and Polish summer camps. He learned at camp that all children are alike because they speak the common language of childhood. They laugh at the same things; they feel the same

weight of life and they weep at the same things. As Korczak influence grew he founded the first children's newspaper, The Little Review, and had a radio program as the Old Doctor, whose warmth and wit endeared him to Polish children all over the country. The Little Review was a press phenomenon of an unprecedented scale – a paper edited and written by children, which maintained the appearance of a real paper and which was devoid of any paternalistic and moralizing approach typical of publications addressed to children. His last radio broadcast took place in 1939 during the start of the war, when he addressed children to soothe them and prepare them for what was coming.

On September 1st, 1939, Germany invaded Poland after having staged several false flag border incidents as a pretext to initiate the attack. Korczak volunteered for military service but was refused due to his age. Shortly after Warsaw fell to the Germans in 1939, Korczak began a memoir, starting with the line, "Reminiscences make a sad, depressing literature." Certainly, he did not expect at the age of sixty-one to be writing a memoir in

occupied Warsaw, in what he called “the hour of reckoning in the saddest hospital in the world.”

In early November 1940, one year after the creation of the ghetto, together with Ms. Stefa and his children, Korczak was forced to leave Krochmalna (which now found itself outside of the ghetto) and to transfer into a building of the State Trade School on 33 Chłodna Street. As part of his resistance to the Nazis, Korczak kept the same structure and routine in his ghetto orphanage. Every Saturday morning, the children were weighed, the court or peers met and handed down its verdicts, and he read aloud the orphanage newspaper. He added an underground school in the orphanage, which included Hebrew in the curriculum to prepare those children if there was an opportunity to escape to Palestine. Korczak struggled to keep his spirits up. This educator who could not bear to see a child suffer from any injustice or an unkind word, who had a taken a vow to uphold the cause of children and to defend their rights, had to pass dead or dying children on the street every day. He records without comment that three boy boys playing on the sidewalk were annoyed that the body of a dead child was in their

way. Korczak unsuccessfully pleaded with the *Judenrat* to provide a place where terminally ill children could die with dignity. In the Ghetto, Korczak refused to wear an armband with a star of David. He felt this demeaned the Jewish star to be used in such a way, but this resistance almost cost him his life. During the move to the Ghetto, in 1940, Korczak protested to the Gestapo that these orphanages potatoes had been confiscated during the move. He was thrown into the notorious Pawiak prison for not wearing his armband. He survived only because of one of his former orphans had the contacts and funds to get him out.

During his time in the ghetto, Korczak spent his days caring for his orphans and attempting to raise funds for food and medicine. When he was a child, Korczak father invited in unemployed workers who went from house to house performing a puppet play during Christmastime. After it was over an old man with a bag appeared to take up donations. The boy, “trembling with excitement,” would toss his little coins into the sack. The old man would peer inside, shake his long white beard, and say: “Very little, very little, young gentleman, a bit more.” The old man with

the sack had taught Korczak a great deal: He writes in the ghetto that "The hopelessness of defense against persistent requests and unbounded demands that are impossible to meet. At first, you give eagerly, then less enthusiastically, from a sense of duty, then, following the laws of inertia, from habit and without heart, and then resentfully, angrily, with despair." Each morning in the ghetto he got up, slung a sack over his aching shoulder, and went out to makes his rounds of wealthy contacts and social service agencies to plead, then demand, money and food for his two hundred children. He was as relentless as the old man: no matter what they gave, it was never enough.

Korczak took a break from writing in his memoir until May of 1942, nearly a two-year break. We can surmise that he started writing again because of the increasing violence of Nazi death squads and rumors of impending mass deportations. For the first two weeks in July, when smugglers of food and supplies were being slaughtered, Korczak, the writer, emerges imagining a planet called Ro. The astronomer who lives on it, Professor Zi, can convert heat radiation into moral power and can bestow order and

tranquility everywhere except on “that restless spark, Planet Earth.” Looking down on the wars of the planet, Professor Zi wonders if he should simply put an end to this senseless, bloody game. But with the compassion of the Old Doctor, he concludes: “Planet Earth is still young. And a beginning is painful labor.” Professor Zi has all-encompassing power on Planet Ro, but Janusz Korczak has no control down in the smoldering ghetto, except in his children’s republic. Still the inventive pedagogue, he makes a game out of catching the flies that swarm over the toilet buckets. He writes of the thrill he received when one of the boys asks: “May I pay the flies later? I can’t wait,” and another offers to catch his flies for him. “Community good will, what a mighty force,” Korczak writes.

Rumors, impossible to verify, continued to spread through the ghetto that Jews were being gassed in other cities and that railroad cars were waiting to deport everyone from the Warsaw ghetto. Korczak Polish disciples on the Aryan side also heard the rumors, and sent Igor Newerly, his former secretary, into the ghetto disguised as a water and sewer inspector with a false

identity card to bring Korczak out. According to Newerly, Korczak refused to abandon the children at such a perilous time. He did, however, promise to send Newerly the diary he was working on for safekeeping.

In the ghetto Korczak attempted to keep kids occupied and thought that they might enjoy acting in a play The Post Office, written by the Indian writer and philosopher Rabindranath Tagore, whose empathy for children was much like his own. The production, which took place on July 18 – four days before deportations were announced and three weeks before the young actors would march to their deaths – has become legendary. In the play, Amal, a gentle and imaginative orphan adopted by a poor couple, is confined to his room with a serious illness, shut in from the outside world, like everyone in the ghetto, awaiting an uncertain future. He longs to fly to that land to which the King's doctor, greater than the one he has now, will lead him by the hand. The invited guests gasp along with Amal when the royal doctor suddenly appears and orders all the doors and windows to be opened. Amal's pain is gone, and he can see the stars twinkling on

the other side of the darkness. Asked why he chose that play, Korczak is reported to have said that he wanted to help the children face death without fear. But in his diary, he makes only a short notation about the afternoon: “Applause, handshakes, smiles, efforts at cordial conversation.”

July 22 was Korczak sixty-fourth birthday. It was also the day the Gestapo informed the ghetto that there would be deportations. By 4 PM that afternoon, six thousand people were to be at the *Umschlagplatz*, a large loading area just north of the ghetto, where freight trains were waiting to take them to “Resettlement in the East.” Korczak surely stood in the hysterical crowds looking at the notices posted on the ghetto walls, but rather than accept his inability to alter the surreal events of that day, he did battle where he could.

In the final entry of August 5 or August 6, Korczak is watering the “poor orphanage plants,” which had been smuggled into the ghetto by his Polish friends. He muses about the young German soldier standing with his rifle by the ghetto wall across the street. The soldier was not shooting at him, even though his “bald

head in the window" would make a "splendid target." Korczak tries to see him as a young man with an identity other than a killer with a gun. "Perhaps he was a village teacher, a street sweeper in Leipzig, a waiter in Cologne." He considers waving his hand in a friendly gesture. He writes what will be the final words of his ghetto diary: "Perhaps he doesn't even know that things are as they are? He may have arrived only yesterday from far away..." We see that to his last day in the ghetto Korczak tries to hold on to his humanity.

On Thursday, August 6, 1942, he and the children were sitting down to their meager breakfast when they heard the dread call: "All Jews out." We can be certain that Korczak tried to reassure the children as they lined up fearfully, clutching their little flasks of water, their few possessions, their diaries. No one had yet escaped from Treblinka to reveal the truth: they were not going East, but sixty miles northeast of Warsaw to immediate extermination in gas chambers. We know from survivors who watched from behind closed shutters, and from Gestapo records, that Korczak, hatless, in high military boots, holding two young

children by the hand, was at the head of the orderly procession of 192 children and 10 staff members, including the loyal Stefa, who had also turned down offers to escape. They marched four abreast in the broiling heat, holding high the flag of King Matt, green on one side, with the blue Star of David set against a field of white on the other, escorted by soldiers, whips, and dogs. Wladyslaw Szpilman in his memoir, *The Pianist* says of the scene "He told the orphans they were going out into the country, so they ought to be cheerful. At last, they would be able to exchange the horrible suffocating city walls for meadows of flowers, streams where they could bathe, woods full of berries and mushrooms. He told them to wear their best clothes, and so they came out into the yard, two by two, nicely dressed and in a happy mood."

We learn from the memoir of Nahum Remba, a *Judenrat* [Jewish council] official who ran a small first aid station on the *Umschlagplatz*, that 4,000 orphans, with their caretakers, went on the transports with Korczak and the children that day. He tried to persuade Korczak to go with him to ask the Judenrat to intercede, but Korczak would not consider leaving the children even for a

moment in this terrifying place. Remba states “I shall never forget this scene as long as I live,” Remba wrote. “This was no march to the trains, but rather a mute protest, with eyes full of contempt for this murderous regime.” The Jewish police jumped to attention and saluted when they saw Korczak helping the children into the crowded freight cars. The Germans asked: “Who is that man?” The doors closed. There were no survivors.

Outside the ghetto a red-haired boy appeared at his door with a package for Igor Newerly. Newerly realized that Korczak had kept his promise to send him the diary. He took it immediately to Korczak Polish orphanage and helped the caretaker brick it up under the eaves. After the war, when Poland was part of the Soviet bloc, Newerly, who had survived two years in Auschwitz (where he thought he spotted the red-haired boy), was able to retrieve the diary from its hiding place.

Only one rock is engraved: “Janusz Korczak (Henryk Goldszmit) and the children.” At Treblinka today. Over the years, the Korczak legend has gathered momentum in Europe as poets and playwrights continue to recreate his march with the children to

the trains. Korczak societies have sprung up in many countries and hold international conferences to spread his educational ideas and to advocate for the welfare of children. The Poles claim Korczak as a martyr, who would have been canonized if he had converted; the Israelis claim him as one of the Thirty-Six Just Men, whose pure souls make possible the world's salvation. UNESCO declared 1978-79 the Year of Janusz Korczak, to coincide with the Year of the Child and the centenary of his birth. In 1971, the Russians discovered a new asteroid and named it 2163 Korczak. Now the Old Doctor really does have a planet very much like Planet Ro from which to control the moral forces in the universe and to put into effect his Declaration of Children's Rights. Janusz Korczak often said life is a strange dream, I ask you today to remember him not for how he died, but for the values he lived his life.

**Further Resources**:

*Notes from the Warsaw Ghetto: The Journal of Emmanuel Ringelblum*

*The Warsaw Ghetto : Memoirs of Janusz Korcza*

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Here, former Oakton College student Sarah Gawo informs us about resistance in the ghettos, specifically, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Even in the face of certain death, people fought back. Sarah reminds us that people were not willing victims.

**Resistance: Warsaw Ghetto Uprising**

Sarah Gawo

Jewish resistance against Nazi Germany occurred in a variety of ways ranging from minor to major offenses. Resistance ranged from actively using violence to using non-violent tactics. This essay will discuss the form of Jewish resistance undertaken in the Warsaw ghetto, as well as describing the various conditions of each type of ghetto.

The ghettos were used to separate the Jewish people from society. They were segregated because the Nazis believed that Jewish people were like vermin. Thus, the Nazis believed that they needed to contain the Jews in an enclosed space in order to not increase disease. Consequently, the Jewish residents of the ghettos were mistreated and discriminated against. The Nazis created three types of ghettos: destruction, closed, and open. Closed ghettos

were fenced with barbed wire similar to that of a concentration camp. Open ghettos restricted the Jews from freely leaving and entering. Lastly, destruction ghettos were heavily enforced with Nazi workers who would either kill or deport the Jews. Under these circumstances, Jewish resistance grew in response to all the terror that they have endured from the Nazis as well as its collaborators.

A notable example of Jewish resistance is the Uprising of the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943. Heinrich Himmler, one of the main architect of the Holocaust, ordered that the Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto be rounded up, and then deported to the Treblinka death camp. When the Jewish Fighting Organization (ZOB) and other groups heard about this plan, they decided it was time for the Jewish to resist the deportation. Many Jews used smuggled weapons such as machine guns and grenades to attack the Nazis. There were approximately 800 Jewish fighters and double the amount of the German troops. The Jews were able to stop the Germans but not for long. “The rebellion led by the ZOB and ZZW was crushed, and most of the ghetto residents were either deported

to the death camps or killed in the fighting and subsequent razing of the ghetto by German troops" (Einwohner, 663). After the destruction of the ghetto, the Nazis demolished the Great Synagogue of Warsaw. Approximately 7,000 Jews died in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, and 50,000 Jews were sent to concentration camps and killing centres.

Understanding Jewish resistance, one must consider the conditions of the ghettos and the high-risk activism undertaken by the resistors in the Warsaw ghetto. Not only did the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising exemplify the Jewish people's strength of spirit, but it also set precedent for the varying Jewish communities to also get involved in high-risk action to resist the Nazis.

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One of the most well-known resistance movements of the Holocaust was the White Rose. Professor, historian and German scholar Stephani Richards-Wilson presents her work on the White Rose and their American connections, along with assessments and critical resources for further research.

## The White Rose and Their American Connections

*Stephani Richards-Wilson*

The White Rose resistance group (*Die Weiße Rose* in German) was a circle of friends and classmates studying at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany during the Second World War. In 1942-1943, they composed six flyers and distributed thousands of copies calling for nonviolent resistance against Hitler and the National Socialists (Nazis). The group included adult mentors who provided spiritual, financial, or other types of support. One of their professors, Kurt Huber, joined their efforts and was arrested, tried, and executed in 1943 similar to five other core members. The story of the White Rose is well known in Germany, however, connections to the United States are lesser known. This essay explores those connections then and now.

The courageous story of the White Rose, the Nazi resistance circle consisting of mostly university students, is well known in Germany and much of the world. You can find many books and resources about the core members on the Internet. Today, many streets, schools, and events throughout Germany memorialize the core members and their professor, especially in February when they were arrested by the Gestapo in 1943. In 1942-1943, during the Second World War, the White Rose students produced six flyers and made thousands of copies in the cover of night and in secret. They called for nonviolent resistance against Hitler's dictatorship. They typed the original flyers on a Remington typewriter manufactured in New York.[71]

During that same month of February 1943, Hans Scholl, Alexander Schmorell, and Willi Graf ventured out into the city streets of Munich three late nights and early hours of the morning. They painted freedom (*Freiheit*) slogans in the form of graffiti on

[71] The core members who were executed by the Nazis included Hans Scholl (1918-1943) and his younger sister Sophie Scholl (1921-1943), Alexander Schmorell (1917-1943), Christoph Probst (1919-1943), Willi Graf (1918-1943) and Professor Kurt Huber (1893-1943).

city walls and buildings near the university where they were studying medicine (Graf, 2004, pp. 322-323).[72] In less than a year, five of the students and their professor, Kurt Huber, were tried and executed by the Nazis for high treason. Only one of the core members who was also arrested and jailed, Traute Lafrenz, survived the trial and war. After a year in various Gestapo prisons, she was liberated by the Americans.

The students first got to know each other by attending private literary evenings near Ludwig Maximillian University of Munich where they were enrolled. The White Rose circle began as a group of friends and classmates who shared similar interests, most notably in books and literature. They mostly read European literature, however, one of the members, Willi Graf, was particularly impressed with award-winning American novelist and playwright Thornton Wilder (1897-1975). Wilder was born in Madison, Wisconsin and served in the US Army Air Force

[72] They painted "Freedom," "Down with Hitler," and "Mass murderer Hitler." Graf, Scholl, and Schmorell were student soldiers and assigned to a student company affiliated with the German army.

Intelligence in the Second World War. Graf especially liked his novel *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* (1927), which he read in the summer of 1942.[73]

The group that originally met to discuss books and eventually emerged as the White Rose was informally started by Traute Lafrenz, Hans Scholl, and Alexander Schmorell, all medical students at LMU (Waage, 2012, p. 256). They shared an interest in culture, music, books, theological and philosophical questions, as well as resistance to Hitler and the Nazis. Traute brought the third White Rose flyer to students in Hamburg in November 1942, thereby cultivating a White Rose branch among her former classmates (Waage, 2012, p. 171). Along with Sophie Scholl, she obtained paper and envelopes as well. When the Scholls were arrested, she tried to warn others and removed evidence. She was also arrested and stood trial April 19, 1943. She was in various Gestapo jails until liberated by American troops on April 16, 1945.

[73] In this fable, Wilder explores the meaning of the human condition and the connection between the individual and cosmic dimensions. Ironically, Graf himself was fictionalized in a historical novel called *All God's Children* published in 2013 by Wisconsin writer Anna Schmidt.

She came to the United States in 1947 and completed her medical studies in California. She married a fellow physician, became an American citizen, and had four children whom she raised in Evanston, Illinois.[74]

There were five White Rose trials in total with numerous defendants. After Hans Scholl was arrested in February 1943, he told the Gestapo that he arbitrarily picked the name, the White Rose, however Newborn (2006) suspects that might not have been the case. It's possible Scholl said that to protect a friend (p. 4.). Newborn believes he intentionally tried to mislead the interrogator and to protect Josef Söhngen, a bookseller who offered the White Rose students a safe place to meet and hid banned books in his shop. He had also allowed the group to hide the flyers and

[74] Traute ran a small medical practice and led the Esperanza School in Chicago from 1971 to 1992. The school provides special education for developmentally challenged children from the poorer sections of the city. She retired in 1994. In 2009, she was awarded the Herbert Weichmann medal from the Jewish Community in Hamburg, Germany. After retiring and as of 2021, she lives in South Carolina and goes by the name Traute Page, MD. She was awarded the *Bundesverdienstkreuz* (Federal Cross of Merit or Order of Merit), a prestigious honor in Germany, on May 3, 2019, her 100th birthday.

duplicating materials in his cellar (Weiße Rose Stiftung, 2006, p. 76).[75]

*Die Weiße Rose* (*The White Rose*), a novel by B. Traven, was originally published in 1929 in Germany. It was serialized in the last issues of the *Munich Post* newspaper which like the White Rose students, fought to expose the truth about Hitler and his sinister agenda (Rosenbaum, 2017). After the Nazis seized power in 1933 and took control of the media, they shut down the *Post* and banned Traven's novel. The story takes place in the 1920s, partly in the United States and partly in Mexico. An American oil company purchased the oil rights to the haciendas encircling the *Rosa Blanca* or White Rose. The plot revolves around the evils of American corporate greed contrasted against First Nation reverence for their land and tradition. The struggle between good

[75] Newborn wrote an essay entitled, "Solving Mysteries: The Secret of the White Rose." Originally it was intended to be the afterword of his book which he co-authored with Annette Dumbach, *Sophie Scholl and the White Rose: The Remarkable German Students who Defied Hitler*. In this essay, he suggests that the White Rose novel was the inspiration for the group's name. For more information about the origins of the name and how the novel resonated with Hans Scholl and Alexander Schmorell who co-authored the first four White Rose flyers in summer 1942, see http://www.judnewborn.com/jud-solvingmysteries.html).

versus evil, against overwhelming odds, most likely resonated with the White Rose students and the *Munich Post*.

In late 1942 and early 1943, the White Rose students attempted to expand their circle of helpers. Through a mutual friend, they met with Falk Harnack (1913-1991). Falk's older brother, Arvid Harnack and his American born wife, Mildred Fish-Harnack were leading members of the Berlin resistance network called the Red Orchestra. Similar to the White Rose students, they were arrested and executed by the Nazis. There were never able to connect and combine their resistance efforts.

Dr. Arvid Harnack (1901-1942), was a German economist and senior governmental official in the Third Reich. He secretly worked to undermine the Nazi war efforts in a resistance circle called the Red Orchestra (*Rote Kapelle)*. He and another leading figure in the Red Orchestra, German solider Harro Schulze-Boysen (1909-1942) provided critical information to the American and Soviet embassies, including information about Nazi preparations to invade the Soviet Union in 1941. They were sentenced to death for high treason and hanged in Plötzensee Prison in Berlin in

December 1942. The first of the eleven leading resisters in the Harnack/Schulze-Boysen group were hung at that time (Scholl, 2016, p. 149).[76] Arvid's wife, Dr. Mildred Fish-Harnack, was beheaded February 16, 1943 in Berlin. She was born in 1902 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison where she had met Arvid who was studying there on a Rockefeller scholarship. They married and moved to Germany where they secretly led resistance activities. Fish-Harnack is the only American woman executed on Hitler's direct orders.[77]

Similar to the Red Orchestra, the White Rose resistance group embodied independent thinking, individual responsibility,

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[76] Falk Harnack had contacted his cousins Dietrich and Klaus Bonhoeffer in Berlin. They encouraged him to try to save what was left of his brother's resistance circle and indicated they would help him. They were eager for him to connect them with the White Rose students in Munich.

[77] Mildred was a translator, journalist, and highly educated academic and educator. The Harnacks were arrested in September 1942, tried separately, detained, and tortured. Arvid was found guilty and executed for treason in December, and although Mildred was originally sentenced to six years of hard labor, Hitler himself intervened. He ordered a retrial and execution. Since 1986, Mildred's birthday, September 16, has been recognized as a special day of observance in Wisconsin public schools. In 2019, a monument/sculpture was dedicated to her in Madison, Wisconsin. German schools and streets are named after her and the oldest public school in Milwaukee is named after her. See the resources in the appendix for further information.

and tolerance. American publications such as *The New York Times* and *TIME Newsmagazine* referenced the White Rose students and the fatal consequences of their actions soon after they were arrested in 1943. The White Rose continues to impact people around the world and their spirit lives on in social media, books, and cultural events that commemorate their short but significant lives. American playwright Lillian Garrett-Groag, for example, wrote the play *The White Rose*. It premiered in the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego, California in 1991. As recent as 2017, students affiliated with the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Know Better Productions performed the play in the Broom Street Theater in Madison, Wisconsin. Finally in February 2021, Plough Publishing House based in New York, released *Freiheit! The White Rose Graphic Novel*. Despite the passage of time and the distance of Europe, the legacy of the White Rose inspires Germans and Americans alike. We remain connected in hope and humanity.

**Appendix A**

Self-reflect, join the narrative, and share their story

*"Carry on what we began."*
*"Weitertragen, was wir begonnen haben."*

Willi Graf on the day of his execution. He was 25 years old.
October 12, 1943

Willi Graf was the last of the Munich students to be executed by the Nazis. Of those who were executed in 1943, he spent the longest time in prison as well (8 months). He didn't ask, "What can be done?" He asked, "What can I do?" Here are examples of what he did.

- As a teenager, he refused to join the Hitler Youth and joined illegal Catholic youth groups instead.
- He refused to enroll in the liberal arts, his ideal university curriculum, and chose medical studies instead because they were less Nazified.
- Throughout his short life, he refused to relinquish his freedom of thought and read books and authors banned by the Nazis.
- He refused to take a life and served as a combat paramedic when drafted by the German army. He was also a member of the German Red Cross.
- When deployed to the Russian front twice during the Second World War, he refused to treat innocent

civilians as the enemy and helped them at risk of severe reprimand/punishment by his military superiors.

- When arrested and interrogated by the Gestapo after the White Rose members were apprehended in February 1943, Willi Graf refused to cooperate and give up the names of his friends whom he had contacted or recruited. He spared their lives at the expense of his own.

**Questions for consideration**

The White Rose students had no formal authority or positional power. How do you think they mastered their fear to confront evil? What can we learn from them? How can we honor them and safeguard their story?

The White Rose circle remained true to their convictions. How do you think they empowered themselves? What do you do to remain steadfast to your values and ideals?

How do you follow your conscience? What gives you courage?

The White Rose students weren't bystanders and intervened on behalf of others. What are some ways we can express solidarity and compassion with others in today's world?

## Appendix B
## Additional Resources

The White Rose Foundation, Munich, Germany. The White Rose Foundation Memorial is located near the atrium in Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (also known as LMU).

General Information about the White Rose https://www.weisse-rose-stiftung.de/white-rose-resistance-group/

Information about the travelling exhibition and audio guides in English
https://www.weisse-rose-stiftung.de/exhibition-the-white-rose/

The White Rose Leaflets in German (Flyers)
https://www.weisse-rose-stiftung.de/white-rose-resistance-group/leaflets-of-the-white-rose/

White Rose Wall Slogans (Graffiti) from February 1943
https://www.weisse-rose-stiftung.de/white-rose-resistance-group/white-rose-wall-slogans/

Short video that shows how the White Rose members produced the flyers https://youtu.be/syX4xftU1xQ

White Rose memorial organ concert near the atrium in LMU where the Scholl siblings distributed the last of their flyers on February 18, 1943. They were arrested the same day, tried at a mock trial, and executed February 22, 1943 along with Christoph Probst. (This concert was recorded on February 22, 2021.)
https://youtu.be/I1vVdewvPz4

The White Rose Institute is also located in Munich, Germany.
https://weisserose.info/

The White Rose Project at the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom
https://whiteroseproject.org/the-white-rose-in-real-time/

Willi Graf of the White Rose: Words, Will, and a Way to Resist (Short Blog Post)
https://whiteroseproject.org/willi-graf-and-a-way-to-resist/

The White Rose Pamphlets in English (Flyers)
https://whiteroseproject.org/resources/pamphlets-in-english/

Writing and Resistance: The White Rose Pamphlets – A Live Reading (Monday, February 22, 2021)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mqhoCj5MXzo&feature=youtu.be&ab_channel=TORCH%7CTheOxfordResearchCentreintheHumanities

*Freiheit*: *The White Rose Graphic Novel* Trailer (2021)
https://youtu.be/18EDM8IUi2k

Willi Graf of the White Rose: Faith Under Fire (Online Article)
http://www.kritische-ausgabe.de/artikel/faith-under-fire

*Sophie Scholl: The Final Days* (Award-winning film from 2005)
https://youtu.be/baRvF6ZBK18

The National WWII Museum: Sophie Scholl and the White Rose
https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/sophie-scholl-and-white-rose

Interview with Dr. Traute Page in her home in South Carolina, USA, in 2018
https://youtu.be/QMk6kumX0yM

German Resistance Memorial Center in Berlin, Germany (See the individual biographies for the White Rose members as well as these.) https://www.gdw-berlin.de/en/home/

Traute Lafrenz's Biography https://www.gdw-berlin.de/en/recess/biographies/index_of_persons/biographie/view-bio/traute-lafrenz/?no_cache=1

Hans Leipelt's Biography https://www.gdw-berlin.de/en/recess/biographies/index_of_persons/biographie/view-bio/hans-leipelt/?no_cache=1

Falk Harnack's Biography https://www.gdw-berlin.de/en/recess/biographies/index_of_persons/biographie/view-bio/falk-harnack/?no_cache=1

Arvid Harnack's Biography https://www.gdw-berlin.de/en/recess/biographies/index_of_persons/biographie/view-bio/arvid-harnack/?no_cache=1

Mildred Fish-Harnack of the Nazi resistance network called the Red Orchestra
https://news.wisc.edu/mildred-fish-harnack-honored-as-hero-of-resistance-to-nazi-regime/

Wisconsin Public Television Documentary about Mildred Fish-Harnack, the only American woman executed on Adolf Hitler's direct orders
https://pbswisconsin.org/wisconsins-nazi-resistance-the-mildred-fish-harnack-story/

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Holocaust Encyclopedia
The White Rose Opposition Movement
https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/white-rose

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum YouTube Channel
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC15plGNCMRkMmREMNkbYJPA

# Appendix C

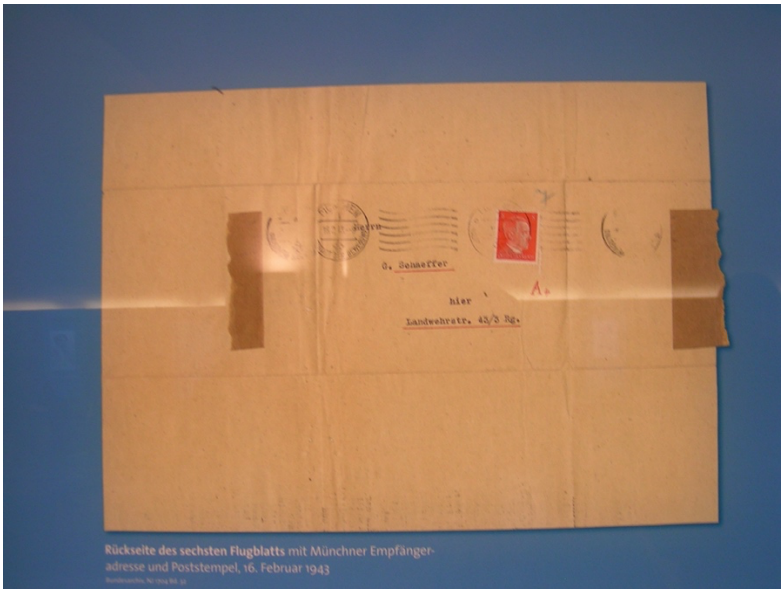
Explanatory Notes About the Photographs Taken by Stephani Richards-Wilson

(All photographs were taken in 2018 except for those related to Know Better Productions and The White Rose play performance, which were taken in 2017. Image #9 is from the Internet.)

Image one

Image two

Image three




**Rückseite des sechsten Flugblatts** mit Münchner Empfängeradresse und Poststempel, 16. Februar 1943

Image four

DIE FLUGBLÄTTER. AUFRUF ZUM WIDERSTAND
Hitler kann den Krieg nicht gewinnen.

Image five

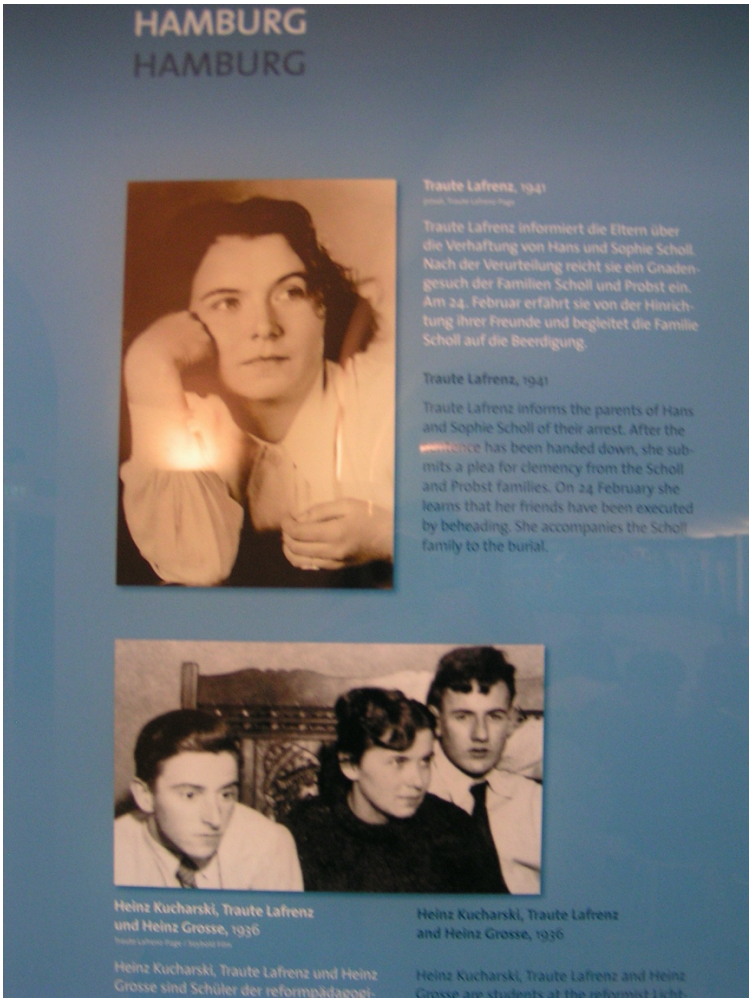
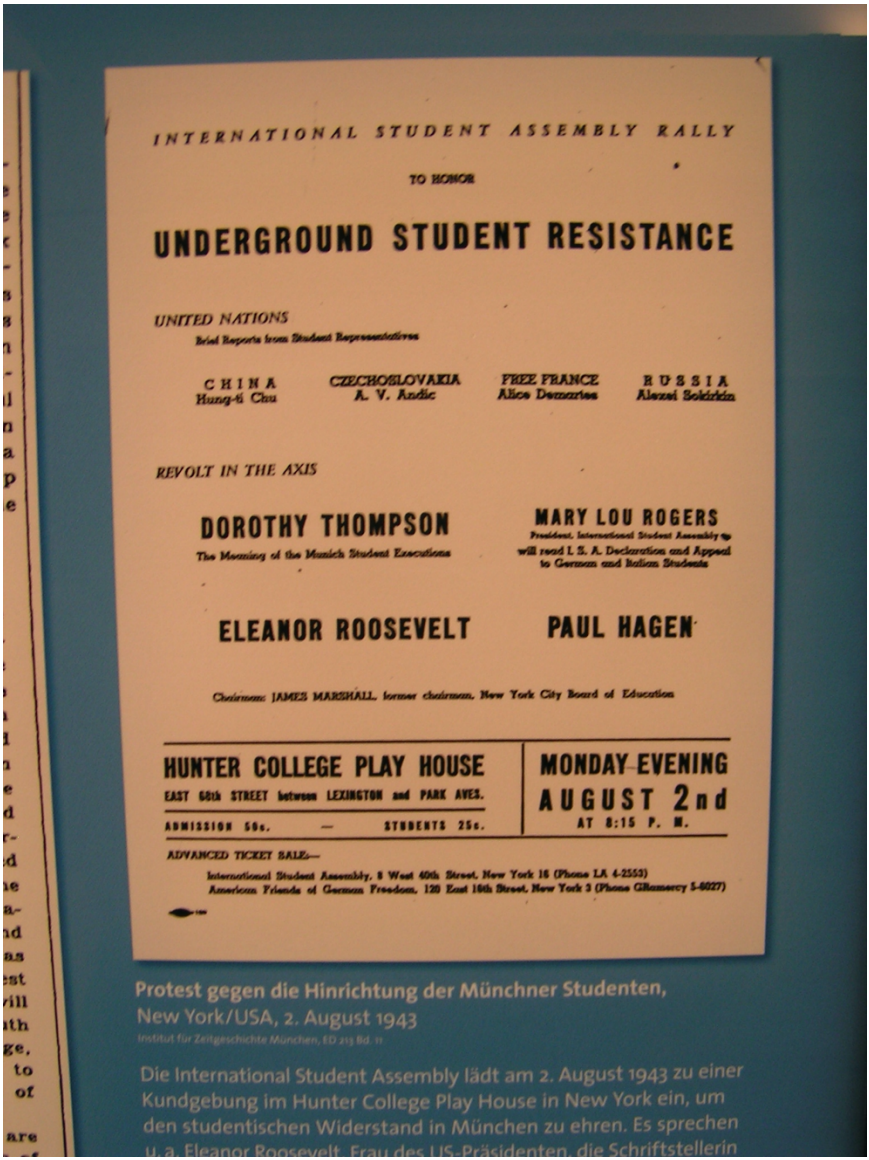

HAMBURG
HAMBURG
Traute Lafrenz, 1941
Traute Lafrenz informiert die Eltern über die Verhaftung von Hans und Sophie Scholl. Nach der Verurteilung reicht sie ein Gnadengesuch der Familien Scholl und Probst ein. Am 24. Februar erfährt sie von der Hinrichtung ihrer Freunde und begleitet die Familie Scholl auf die Beerdigung.
Traute Lafrenz, 1941
Traute Lafrenz informs the parents of Hans and Sophie Scholl of their arrest. After the sentence has been handed down, she submits a plea for clemency from the Scholl and Probst families. On 24 February she learns that her friends have been executed by beheading. She accompanies the Scholl family to the burial.
Heinz Kucharski, Traute Lafrenz und Heinz Grosse, 1936
Heinz Kucharski, Traute Lafrenz und Heinz Grosse sind Schüler der reformpädagogi-
Heinz Kucharski, Traute Lafrenz and Heinz Grosse, 1936
Heinz Kucharski, Traute Lafrenz and Heinz

Image six


INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ASSEMBLY RALLY
TO HONOR
UNDERGROUND STUDENT RESISTANCE
UNITED NATIONS
Brief Reports from Student Representatives
CHINA
Hung-li Chu
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
A. V. Andic
FREE FRANCE
Alice Demarles
RUSSIA
Alexei Sokirkin
REVOLT IN THE AXIS
DOROTHY THOMPSON
The Meaning of the Munich Student Executions
MARY LOU ROGERS
President, International Student Assembly
will read U. S. A. Declaration and Appeal
to German and Italian Students
ELEANOR ROOSEVELT
PAUL HAGEN
Chairman: JAMES MARSHALL, former chairman, New York City Board of Education
HUNTER COLLEGE PLAY HOUSE
EAST 68th STREET between LEXINGTON and PARK AVES.
ADMISSION 50c. — STUDENTS 25c.
MONDAY EVENING
AUGUST 2nd
AT 8:15 P. M.
ADVANCED TICKET SALE—
International Student Assembly, 8 West 40th Street, New York 18 (Phone LA 4-2553)
American Friends of German Freedom, 120 East 16th Street, New York 3 (Phone GRamercy 5-6027)

**Protest gegen die Hinrichtung der Münchner Studenten, New York/USA, 2. August 1943**

Institut für Zeitgeschichte München, ED 213 Bd. 11

Die International Student Assembly lädt am 2. August 1943 zu einer Kundgebung im Hunter College Play House in New York ein, um den studentischen Widerstand in München zu ehren. Es sprechen u. a. Eleanor Roosevelt, Frau des US-Präsidenten, die Schriftstellerin

Image seven

Image eight

## Image nine

From the community: Oakton to host events focusing on student resistance against the Nazis April 10

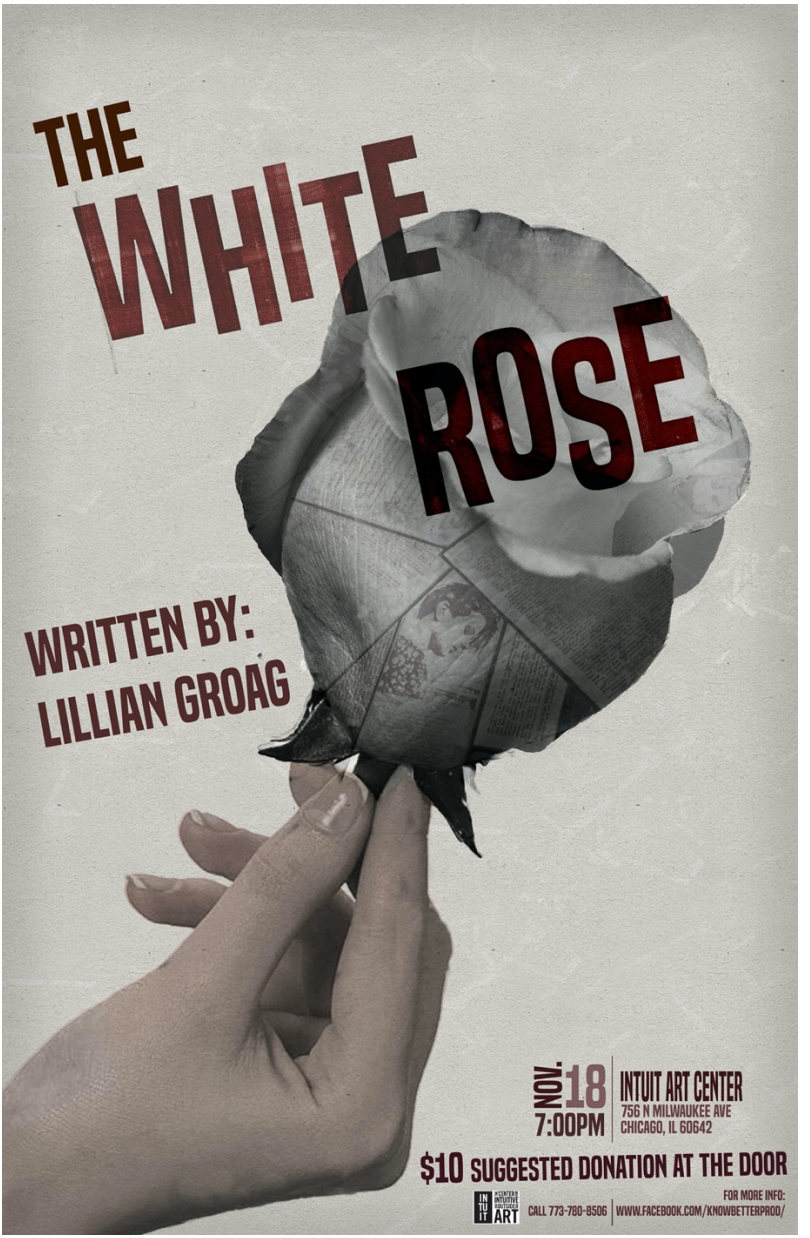
Posted by Oakton Community College, Community Contributor

By Community Contributor Oakton Community College

MARCH 23, 2018, 3:26 PM

## Image ten

Image eleven



## Guide to images

1. Students and visitors leave lit candles and roses at the White Rose memorial near the atrium at LMU where Hans and Sophie Scholl tossed the last of their flyers from the balcony and were soon arrested. The seven individuals represent the Scholl siblings, Professor Huber, Christoph Probst, Willi Graf, Alexander Schmorell, and Hans Leipelt (1921-1945). After Professor Kurt Huber had been arrested, Leipelt and Marie-Luise Jahn collected money for his wife and although they sent the money to her anonymously, they were denounced. Previously they had received a copy of the sixth White Rose flyer in the mail. They made more copies and took some to Hamburg, Germany where their friends helped to distribute them (Weiße Rose Stiftung, 2006, p. 26). Marie-Luise was sent to a maximum-security penitentiary and Hans Leipelt was executed at Munich-Stadelheim prison on January 29, 1945, the same prison where the White Rose students had been executed in 1943.
2. The atrium at LMU which students and faculty still pass through today.
3. The Sixth White Rose flyer on display in the White Rose Foundation Memorial at LMU. The students ran out of envelopes and typed addresses on the back.
4. The White Rose Foundation Memorial at LMU.
5. Exhibit of Traute Lafrenz Page in the White Rose Foundation at LMU. She was originally from Hamburg, Germany.
6. An exhibit in the White Rose Foundation Memorial at LMU. News of the White Rose students' executions reached the United States. American students organized a protest at Hunter College in New York. They wanted to honor the White Rose students on August 2, 1943. Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of then President Franklin D. Roosevelt was scheduled to attend.
7. An exhibit in the White Rose Foundation Memorial at LMU. This is an American made Remington typewriter, similar to the one the White Rose students used to compose

their flyers. Their original typewriter was inadvertently later sold to an antique shop.

8. This bust is a memorial to Willi Graf and is located in the St. Johann city hall in Saarbrücken, Germany where he and his two sisters grew up. He is now an honorary citizen, and the city maintains his gravesite, laying white roses and a wreath near his headstone every October 12.
9. Oakton Collegein Illinois hosted the White Rose travelling exhibit on loan from the White Rose Foundation in April 2018.
10. and 11. American university students performed the White Rose play in Madison, Wisconsin in November 2017. Subsequent performances were held in Chicago. The play was written by American playwright Lillian Garrett-Groag.

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“Surely there is no more wretched
sight that the human body unloved
and uncared for.” - Corrie Ten Boom

One of the most famous cultural icons of the 20th century was also an active resister against the Nazis. Meredith Hudson introduces us to the incredible life and critical activism of Josephine Baker. Then, Hudson reviewed the work of Virginia Hall, an American spy recruited by the British Special Ops to work with the French resistance as a secret agent who built networks and helped Allied POWs escape the Nazis.

## Josephine Baker

*Meredith Hudson*

Josephine Baker was a legendary entertainer in Europe. At the height of her career in the late 1920's-1940's, she was one of the biggest stars in France. She captivated audiences with her dancing, singing, beauty, and charisma. However, few know that there was another side to Josephine Baker besides her headlining extravagant shows. She was a fierce advocate for civil rights and equality, which began while growing up in St. Louis, Missouri. Josephine worked tirelessly for those who were discriminated against, especially during the Nazi occupation of France during WWII. Josephine put her life and career on the line to help the French Resistance and Allied forces by spying and sending information to help defeat the Nazis. This essay will focus on

Josephine Bakers life, career, and resistance against Nazism during World War II.

Freda Josephine Baker was born in St. Louis, MO on June 3rd 1906. Her mother was Carrie McDonald, who was a vaudeville performer in her early years, however was working as a laundress at the time Josephine was born. The identity of her father remains a mystery to this day. Several reports and biographies have said that a man named Eddie Carson was Josephine's biological father, because his name is listed on her birth certificate. However, in 1993 her foster son Jean Claude Baker and several researchers found that Carrie listed Eddie Carson as the father because they were acquaintance, and that Josephine's actual birth father was an unknown white man of German descent. They had found that this unknown man had actually paid for Carrie to give birth and recover in a white-only hospital in St. Louis, and that her first name was Freda. Sources also say that there were three letters on her birth certificate that said EDW, so that is how the theory that Josephine's biological father was actually white. However, both alleged fathers abandoned Carrie shortly after Josephine was born,

and she was single mother to Josephine until she married a man named Arthur Martin. From that marriage came three siblings: Richard, Margaret, and Willa Mae Martin. Arthur Martin was often unemployed, so the family struggled financially for several years.

Josephine's childhood was a very difficult one due to the family living in dire conditions. They lived in poverty and often went hungry. By the time she was around 8-10 years old, she ended up dropping out of school to go to work and support her family. Josephine worked as a laundress, babysitter and domestic servant for white families in St. Louis. Josephine was mistreated by these families and was often punished if she made any "mistakes." She was a victim of racial segregation and discrimination, and was a witness to the East St. Louis riots in July 1917 (Also known as the East St. Louis Massacre).

This event was a series of massacres and violent attacks carried by white people against African Americans. The reason for it is because of the increase in population of African Americans in

white neighborhoods and that white people felt that their jobs were being taken away from them. It began in late May 1917, but this specific event in July is considered to be one of the worst racial riots in US history. More than 6,000 African Americans were displaced, homes and businesses were burnt down which led more than $400,000 (10.25 million today) of property damage. There was also around 150 black people who were murdered. This massacre drew national attention and there was a silent protest march in NYC in late July. [78]

This event impacted Josephine personally since she witnessed homes being burnt and people fleeing the city. In later interviews she stated that she was forever changed by this event and was the start of her wanting to get out of St. Louis to start her career. Despite this horrendous event that she witnessed at age 11, Josephine grew interested in dancing and singing. She would go and watch vaudeville performances and would mimic the dancing

[78]Stephanie Trouillard. "Dancer, singer, activist, spy: The extraordinary life of Josephine Baker." https://www.france24.com/en/, November 2021. https://webdoc.france24.com/josephine-baker-paris-pantheon/.

moves and comedic routines. When she turned 13, Josephine left home and worked as a waitress at the Old Chauffer's Club, and met her first husband Willie Wells. They got married but the marriage barely lasted a year and they divorced. By the time she was 15 years old she started to work with a street performance group called the Jones Family Band. This opportunity got her out of St. Louis and she would travel to different US cities. However, due to her young age she could not join the group in NYC, so she stayed behind in Philadelphia and married her second husband named William Howard Baker. Once she turned 16, she made it to New York City during the Harlem Renaissance. It was in NYC when she became part of a chorus line and stood out due to her comedic abilities. She would pretend to not know the routine and pretend to stumble, which caught the attention of the audience. She ended getting a role in the chorus line for a show called "*Shuffle Along."*

The show was highly successful and Josephine's role in it grew due to her comedic dancing. However, Josephine did feel that she was limited in her creativity, and she was impacted by

both racism and segregation at several shows and clubs. When she was offered a headlining role in the show *"La Revue Negre,*" in Paris,France; she took the job and set sail to Paris. When she got to Paris, she immediately fell in love with the city, it's culture and inclusivity. She made her debut in October 1925, and became an overnight sensation. The audience could not get enough of Josephine. As her popularity grew, Josephine's dance routines and costumes started to get more risqué. She introduced what the French called *La Danse Sauvage (The Wild Dance)*, and she became a huge sensation.

Her name made the headlines in which she was called *"The Black Venus,"* and her shows were sold out and the talk of the city. By the end of the 1920's she became a huge celebrity and the highest grossing artist in Europe. By the beginning of the 1930's, Josephine's career expanded to the movies and she starred in several French productions: *The Siren of the Tropics, ZouZou, and Princess TamTam.* She was the first African-American to star in major motion pictures. She was a cultural icon in Paris, that everyone wanted to dress and look like Josephine. She had a line

of hair products called “Bakerfix” which was designed for the costumer to get the sleek, painted on cropped hair look that Josephine had. There was also merchandise such as posters, dolls and anything that was related to Josephine. She also owned a nightclub called *Chez Josephine* where she Josephine was beloved and her career was going from strength to strength.

As the 1930’s continued, Josephine began incorporating singing into her shows. Her most famous song was “*J’ai deux amour (My Two Loves) which* was about her two loves: France and the United States. She did return to the United States in 1936 to perform in the show *Ziegfeld Follies* on Broadway. It was not a successful show and the critics were very harsh on her singing voice and appearance, and she was also met with hostility and racism. Devastated she returned to France and renounced her US citizenship. She married for the third time to a man named Jean Lion, a French industrialist and through this marriage she was able to become a French citizen. The marriage did not last long and the couple separated in 1941 and divorced at the end of that year. Although Josephine’s personal life was looking up, there was a

movement and ideology that was rising throughout Europe, and was directly impacting France. Nazi Germany had been established in 1933 when Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany. The Nazi ideology was about having a totalitarian society, Aryan supremacy, and eliminating those who they deemed as "inferior." Nazi ideology was very antisemitic and racist. There were several groups in France who actually followed and agreed with Nazi ideology by the mid 1930's. Groups such as the *Croix de Feu (Cross of Fire)* and French parliamentary groups became involved in domestic violence situations, and were pushing a nationalist rhetoric. This impacted Josephine on a personal level due to her marriage and the fact that she was subject to racist attacks by the Nazi ideology. Both Josephine and Jean Lion joined *LICA (now LICRA (International League against racism and antisemitism*)[79] in 1938, with the purpose to combat the rise of both

[79] Barbel Reibmann. "Josephine Baker." https://www.stadtmuseum.de/en/article/josephine-baker, n.d. https://www.stadtmuseum.de/en/article/josephine-baker.

nazi ideology and antisemitism. Josephine continued to work with LICRA until her death in 1975.

Unfortunately, things would take a drastic turn for France by 1939, with the start of WWII. WWII began on September 1st, 1939 when Germany invaded Poland. This invasion prompted both Great Britain and France to declare war on Germany on September 3, 1939. At first France had the advancement…but there wasn't any combat until the spring 1940. This event became known as the "Phoney War." However, France underestimated Germany which would highly impact France. From May 10th to June 22nd 1940, Germany used "*Blitzkrieg* "(lightning) attacks on France. This involved German airplanes known as Stuka diver bombers, armed infantry, and artillery. Their tactic was to disorient France, and prevent France from counterattacking.

France was outnumbered and outmaneuvered. By June 14, 1940. Germany had taken Paris and France surrendered to Germany on June 22nd, 1940. France signed an armistice with Germany on June 22nd, and the terms of this armistice had France under German occupation in the north and west; while southern

France became Vichy France. The very south east part of France was occupied by Axis Italy.

As the Nazis advanced into France, they began to interrogate and investigate individuals who were deemed enemies to the Nazi regime. One of their targets was Josephine Baker. Once the Nazis reached Paris, Josephine fled to southern France to a chateau that she had been renting called *Chateau de Milandres.* Although she was a target, she risked her life by taking in and aiding refugees who were fleeing France. This also included her soon to be ex-husband Jean Lion and his family. Shortly after her move to southern France, she was contacted to join the French Resistance.

There is a key player who recruited Josephine to the French Resistance Movement, and ultimately would assist her on her spying career. His name is Jacque Abtey. Jacque Abtey was counter espionage officer for the French secret services, in which he joined in 1940. At the beginning of WWII, Abtey would recruit spies to collect information on both the Nazis and other Axis powers. The spies for the French resistance were male ... but that

would change once Josephine was recruited. Now, the question is why was Josephine recruited? The answer is the fact is that she was one of the biggest stars in Europe, she was charming, charismatic, and she was very beautiful.

All of those were major assets and she would use those in order to get secrets from diplomats whom she would entertain at parties. Although the Nazi theology preached against people like Josephine ... several diplomats were fans of hers, so she was able to get information from them. Now, why would Josephine be willing to put her career and life on the line for the resistance? It is because she was able to have the freedom that France provided for her. She told Abtey "*France made me what I am ... the Parisians gave me their hearts and I am ready to give them my life.*"[80] Another motivation was the racism that she encountered when she toured

[80] Kristen D. Burton. "Siren of the Resistance: The Artistry and Espionage of Josephine Baker." The National WWII Museum New Orleans, February 1, 2020. https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/siren-resistance-artistry-and-espionage-josephine-baker.

fascist countries prior to WWII. This would fuel her decision to help the resistance. [81]

How did Josephine get started with her spying career? She and Abtey would attend diplomatic parties at both the Japanese and Italian embassies (both of these countries were part of the Axis powers). Josephine would be their entertainment and Abtey posed as her assistant/secretary. She would charm the diplomats and write notes on the palms of her hands, which nearly got her arrested a few times. She would get more discreet and would write notes on her upper arms which she would hide under the sleeves. There was also another famous incident that occurred prior to her leaving France altogether. A young German soldier was sent to interrogate Josephine at her chateau, under the pretense that he was an ally of someone connected to the Resistance. Fortunately, Josephine did not take the bait, and after sending the young soldier away several more came later in the night and surrounded her

[81] Christopher Klein. "Josephine Baker's Daring Double Life as a World War II Spy." History.com, March 15, 2021. https://www.history.com/articles/josephine-baker-world-war-ii-spy.

chateau. Once Josephine made sure that Abtey and guest residents were nowhere in sight, she invited the solders in.

The soldiers would ask her questions and would accuse her of hiding arms or information. Josephine would put on an act and ask the soldiers "*why would think that?"* She would use her charm and wit that he soldiers went on their way without anyone being caught. After this incident Abtey did advice that it would be best for them to leave France. So they came up with the plan of on a "tour" in both South America and North Africa. While a tour was actually happening, this was a to throw the Nazis off and continue their work with the resistance.

Near the end of 1940 both Josephine and Abtey were smuggling documents and information for the Free French Resistance Movement under the leadership of General Charles De Gaulle. Charles De Gaulle was a French general and statesman at the beginning of World War II and led a tank brigade with the French Fifth Army during the Battle of France. He opposed the armistice between France and Germany, and was considered a traitor under the new French government, especially Vichy France.

He fled France in late June 1940 and remained in exile in London until 1944. Despite his exile in London, De Gaulle continued his leadership with the Free French movement in London. Both Josephine and Abtey became loyal "Gaullist" supporters throughout WWII.

Josephine and Abtey traveled south to both Spain and Portugal in late November 1940. While traveling, they were carrying and hiding important intelligence for the French Resistance. Josephine would hide important photographs under her dresses, and both had notes that were written in invisible ink. hey also packed music scores, and Abtey would transcribe the most secret intelligence onto Josephine's music scores using the invisible ink. They would continue to attend parties and Josephine would do her shows, all while gathering and documenting crucial information. By January 1941, Abtey and Josephine were ordered to Morocco and set up a transmission center in Casablanca. Josephine would embark on several solo tour, with her first one happening in Lisbon Portugal in May 1941. She would continue to do small tours in Spain, while obtaining information that she

could bring back to Abtey in Morocco. Unfortunately, by June 1941, Josephine fell seriously ill with peritonitis and would be bedridden for eighteen months. She would go back and forth between having brief recoveries but would relapse and would have to be put on bed rest. When she was awake, she would meet with French resistance workers and American diplomats at her hospital bed. By December 1942, she made a full recovery and embarked on her tour of allied camps in North Africa.

In early 1943 Josephine embarked on an 18-month tour of Allied troops in North Africa. She would entertain French, British, American and Moroccan troops. Josephine performed in very treacherous conditions due to being around the desert, but did not ask for special accommodations or payment. She would sleep either in tents or on the ground next to vehicles in order to avoid landlines. She specifically toured and performed at the American camps from April to June 1943. Throughout the tour, Josephine stipulated that she would perform for an inclusive and desegregated audience. Unfortunately, African American servicemen were segregated and limited in their roles throughout

the war, but they changed once Josephine came to perform. They were allowed to sit up at the front and even participated in her shows. This would be a continuation throughout the rest of her career.

Besides being a performer, singer, and spy, Josephine was also a pilot. She got her pilot license in 1936. At the very beginning of WWII in France, Josephine would use her personal plane to fly supplies for the Red Cross before leaving France. In 1943, she joined an all-female group of the French Air Force. She later became second lieutenant in the Free France Air Force Women's Auxiliary. While Josephine did not participate in any air combat, she remained on base and primarily did secretarial work and continued helping the Resistance. Josephine was photographed in her air force uniform for publicity and this helped most the morale of France as World War II was coming to an end.

The liberation of France began on June 6,1944 with D-Day, the battle at Normandy. By August 18th, Allied forces were near Paris, and workers in the city went on strike as Resistance fighters emerged from hiding and began attacking German forces and

fortifications. However, Paris was not a top priority at first and the Allies were going to bypass Paris. De Gaulle spoke with Dwight D Eisenhower on August 21st to reconsider and Eisenhower agree to proceed on liberating Paris. On August 22nd, Free France Resistance, 2nd Armored Division, and 4th Infantry Division made their way to Paris. By August 25th, Germany officially surrendered and the following day Charles De Gaulle led a victory march through the streets of Paris. While this did end the occupation of Paris and most of France, the war was officially over on May 8, 1945.

After WW2, Josephine continued touring by visiting more Allied troops. In late April/early May 1944 she did a tour of England and she was also invited as a guest of honor at an Allied Victory ceremony in Germany. She was honored at Hohenzollern Castle, which was very significant due to the fact that she was being honored in a country that had degraded and ridiculed her. After the Victory ceremony, Josephine went to the Buchenwald concentration camp to sing to survivors who were too weak and ill

to be evacuated. She sang a song called *"In My Village,"* which was a song about the simple pleasures of home.

Josephine's spying career came to an end after the war. She was recognized and acknowledged for her work with the Resistance and for her work with the Women's Auxiliary Air Force. She received both the Medal of Resistance and War Cross in 1946. In 1961, she was honored by Charles De Gaulle with the Legion of Honor. She received the medal and had an outdoor ceremony at her chateau.

In 1947, she married her fourth husband Jo Boullion, who was a French composer and conductor. Together they adopted 12 children from different ethnic background and nationalities. They became known as the "Rainbow Tribe," The children were all brought up in accordance with their heritage and the religions that Baker assigned to them. Josephine stated the following regarding her adopted children…" [There was] no point in adopting children of every colour to be kept away from everyone else! They must be made visible so that people can see that it is in fact possible; that children from different races, raised together as siblings, have no

animosity; that racial hate is not natural. It's an invention by mankind." [82] Her intention was to prove that people of different races could live together as siblings in harmony and that racial hatred is unnatural. She used this family to demonstrate her ideals of universal brotherhood, equality, and anti-racism. However, the harmony didn't last for her marriage to Jo Boullion and they divorced in 1961.

Josephine continued her activism and fight for civil rights. Although she was officially a citizen of France, she did not forget about the United States. She became an outspoken advocate for the Civil Rights Movement. She was invited by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to speak at the March for Washington on August 28th 1963. She was the only woman that gave a speech on that day. She spoke about how she ran away to find freedom in France, and urged America to become a place in which black children no longer need to do the same. She praised the unity of the civil

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[82] Yves Denechere. "Josephine Baker's 'Rainbow Tribe' and the pursuit of universal brotherhood." The Conversation, November 30, 2021. https://theconversation.com/josephine-bakers-rainbow-tribe-and-the-pursuit-of-universal-brotherhood-172714.

rights movement and emphasized that unity is essential for victory. After Martin Luther King's death in 1968, his widow Coretta Scott King asked Josephine to take a leadership role in the Civil Right Movement, but after long thought, Josephine declined so she could focus on her family.

Josephine would continue to perform for the rest of her life. She and her family relocated to the Principality of Monaco after she ran into financial hardships in France. In the early 1970's, Josephine returned to the United States and had a successful tour with sold out crowds and rave reviews. After returning to Europe, she did one last show in Paris, before she passed away unexpectedly from a cerebral hemorrhage on April 12, 1975. Her funeral took place in Paris and attracted more than 20,000 mourners. She was the only American-born woman to receive French military honors at her funeral. There was also a private family service in Monaco, where she was laid to rest. On November 30th 2021, Josephine Baker was inducted into the Pantheon in Paris, France. Josephine was the first American born black woman, entertainer and pilot to be inducted. A cenotaph was

made in her honor and contains soil from significant places in her life: Monaco, France, the Dordogne region (southern France), and St. Louis.

Josephine Baker was a woman of many talents. She was a woman of strength, courage, and perseverance which led to her legendary career and her pursuit for equal rights to everyone. She proved that anyone is capable of standing up against injustices and she proved that by her resistance against Nazism and advocacy for civil right that has impacted generations after her.

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# Virginia Hall: Spy and Resistor Extraordinaire

*Meredith Hudson*

Virginia Hall was an American spy who worked with the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and the United Kingdom Special Operations Executive (SOE) during World War II. She became the most dangerous spy in Europe because she was a highly effective intelligence agent. Her effective strategies with spying in the most dangerous areas and taking on risky operations, helped her become the most decorated female civilian in WWII. Despite her heroism and activism in WWII, Virginia Hall is not as well-known compared to other public figures who helped the Allies achieve victory. However, her name is coming out of the shadows of secrecy and she is now recognized for her heroism despite a few obstacles she faced along the way.

Virginia Hall was born on April 6, 1906 in Baltimore, Maryland. She was the daughter of a wealthy family, and by all accounts was a very adventurous child. She personally called herself "capricious and cantankerous," and was eager for adventure rather than follow the protocol expected of her during that

time. After graduating high school, she attended both Radcliffe and Barnard College where she studied French, German, and Italian. She decided to finish her studies in Europe and studied in France, Italy, and Germany. She became fluent in five different languages (French, Spanish, German, Italian, and Russian), and wanted to become a diplomat for the United States in Europe. She applied for a job in the U.S. Foreign Service but was rejected because she was a woman, and women had very little success in obtaining high position jobs at the time.

In 1931, she traveled to Poland, and did end up getting a job as a clerk at the American Embassy. Here tasks were to process visas and assisting with telegramming. She was later transferred over to the U.S. Consulate in Turkey, where she continued to do more clerical tasks. However, her life would change on a fateful hunting trip in 1933. Virginia accidentally injured her left foot, and ended up having to have her left leg amputated below the knee due to an infection spread. She ended being fitted with a wooden leg that she nicknamed *"Cuthbert."* She went back home to Baltimore and applied again to join the

U.S. Foreign Service, but was rejected because of her disability. Disability rights laws were not yet in effect during the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration (despite the president's own disability and his support for the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, which helped raise awareness of polio and laid groundwork for later disability advocacy), and people with disabilities often faced discrimination. Despite these setbacks, Virginia Hall was eager to serve her country, and that came into place at the start of World War II.[83]

Virginia had fallen in love with France whilst studying there and became a civilian in Paris in February 1940. She had been aware on the rise of fascism and wanted to fight against it. After her arrival in Paris, she quickly joined the *French 9th Artillery Regiment* and became an ambulance driver and was assisting citizens during the Battle of France. France was soon overrun by Nazi Germany and surrendered on June 22nd, 1940.

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[83] Greg Myre. "'A Woman Of No Importance' Finally Gets Her Due." Npr.org, April 18, 2019. https://www.npr.org/2019/04/18/711356336/a-woman-of-no-importance-finally-gets-her-due.

Virginia was forced to flee to Great Britain where she met and was recruited by spymaster Vera Atkins to join the *Special Operations Executive (SOE)*. After joining the SOE, Virginia was back in Vichy, France on August 21st, 1941. She was the second female agent to be sent to the SOE F French section and began to work with the French Resistance. She posed as a reporter for the *New York Post,* and through this cover she was able to interview prominent people, gather information, and file away crucial plans and strategies that would help the French military. She set up her base in Lyon, France and established a network of SOE operatives and French resistance fighters nicknamed HECKLER. HECKLER helped Allied forces with supplies and arms, and logistics with various resistance groups to help defeat the Nazis.

One of Virginia Halls biggest successes was a jailbreak of several SOE agents at Mazauc Prison in July 1942. Mazauc Prison was in Vichy, France and Virginia Hall coordinated for supplies to be smuggled into the prison. The supplies were hidden in sardine cans, and successfully went past the prison guards. All twelve agents escaped Mazauc and hid in safe houses until their return to

Lyon.[84] This achievement embarrassed Vichy authorities and the Nazis that they were determined to capture those who were involved. Virginia became a target as the Nazis began to uncover resistance groups. The Nazis nicknamed Virginia *"the limping lady,"* and she was at the top of their most wanted list. One notorious figure who was after Virginia, was infamous Nazi officer Klaus Barbie. Barbie ordered for posters to be put up with a drawing of Virginia with the following quote: "*The Enemy's Most Dangerous Spy - We Must Find and Destroy Her!"* [85]Virginia was almost caught by the Nazis in 1942 that she ended up fleeing to Spain. She was forced to walk and suffered great pain due to her left leg, but she persevered.

Upon arriving in Spain, she continued her work with the SOE in Madrid, but wanted to return to France. At first, she was

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[84] Brigit Katz. "How a Spy Known as the 'Limping Lady' Helped the Allies Win WWII." Smithsonian Magazine, April 9, 2020. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/how-spy-known-limping-lady-helped-allies-win-wwii-180971889/.

[85] talesofthemiddleages.com. "Virginia Hall: The American Spy the Gestapo Couldn't Catch Who Helped Win World War II," n.d. https://talesofthemiddleages.com/virginia-hall/.

turned down due to the risk, however the Americans were developing their own intelligence service *The Office of Strategic Services (OSS)* and asked her to assist. This gave her the motivation to return to France, and after putting on a disguise, returned to France on a torpedo boat. After her return to France in 1944, Virginia trained three battalions of the French Resistance and helped wage guerrilla warfare against the Nazis. She helped train teachers, doctors, and those of different occupations wage war against the Nazis. Her trainings and tactics during this time were very renowned, that the CIA and other spy agencies utilize them to this very day. It was during that time that Virginia met and later married a French-American soldier named Paul Goillot.

Virginia continued her work helping the French resistance throughout 1944-1945. She would go into occupied areas disguised as a local French milkmaid, and would coordinate drop zones, safety houses, and continued contacts for the resistance. She also coordinated several sabotage attacks against the Nazis with the help of the resistance, British and American officers. These attacks caused the Nazis to retreat and withdraw from

occupied areas in France. This continued tactic helped France win the battle against the Nazis, with their official surrender on May 7, 1945. After the war, Virginia was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross in September 1945 by General William Joseph Donovan. She also was also awarded The Order of the British Empire (MBE) and the Croix de Guerre aves Palme for helping the French resistance during the war. She was posthumously inducted into the Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame in 1988. In 1947, she joined the CIA and was one of the first women to be hired. Sadly, she did endure misogyny and unfair treatment despite her qualifications and contributions. She resigned from the CIA in 1948, but was rehired to work as an intelligence analyst until her retirement in 1960.

Virginia rarely discussed her work due to her mentality on keeping things quiet. She later said that her silence was due to the fact that *"Many of my friends were killed for talking to much."* and she kept that mentality for the rest of her life. Virginia lived the rest of her days with her husband Paul Goillot in Barnesville, Maryland until her death on July 8th, 1942. Although her

distinguished career was not known at first, Virginia Hall legacy is getting the recognition it deserves.

Virginia Hall was a woman of resilience and determination despite the obstacles she faced. She is considered to be a pioneer in intelligence and one of the greatest spies in history. Her courage and leadership have made her one of the most remarkable women in history and her legacy continues to inspire generations of women to follow her example.

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**Unit Ten: The Black Experience in Nazi Germany**

What was the Black experience in Nazi Germany, for Black-Germans or Black-American Gis? Philip Drell related to me and then to my students that when he served in the SPECOU Unit for the U.S. Army during the Second World War, American troops were still segregated and would not be desegregated until 1948. Largely, Black soldiers who served in the French Armed Forces were not segregated but faced discrimination, abuse, and lack of recognition for their bravery and service in the war. The German military targeted black soldiers, no matter what Allied country they came from. In one example, Trouillard (2020) explained that during World War One, Black soldiers were falsely accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including mass murder and rape, and these lies were used as anti-Black propaganda during the Second World War. Noted that German troops especially targeted Black soldiers, which led to the start of events of 19 June 1940, known as the Chasselay massacre:

> After the Wehrmacht won the first battles in the afternoon, they executed French as well as African prisoners. But on the next day – after the last pockets of resistance were

> defeated – they divided the prisoners into two: The French on one side, the Africans on the other. They led the latter down an isolated road. They were sent to a field and machine-gunned." During these massacres, some French soldiers were also executed or wounded for trying to intervene. The Senegalese riflemen's' bodies were left on the ground. Despite the Germans forbidding it, people from Chasselay buried the remains in a mass grave. One man then took an interest in their fate: Jean-Baptiste Marchiani, head of the local office for victims of the war. In the summer of 1940, he offered to give them a proper burial, suggesting a memorial in the model of an African cemetery using red ochre. (Trouillard, 2020, paras. 10-11).

When Drell and the SPECOU unit took part in the liberation of France, they met with a group of French soldiers. Drell and his team took many pictures, including the Black soldiers serving for France that they met up with outside of Paris. Drell insisted that they stay in the pictures, noting that the Black Allied soldiers taking part in the capture of the German soldiers was, in part, some small justice. In the three pictures below, courtesy of the Drell family, he explained the purpose of these images:

> A few weeks after the liberation of Paris, Allied troops surrounded 20,000 Germans. We went down to photograph the proceedings. Unfortunately, the Germans refused to surrender. But when we said we were leaving, they said, "Well, wouldn't you care to be our guests?" So we were guests of the German Army for about a week. They cleaned up the chateau they gave us, and they brought in food-

chickens and so forth-which they cooked for us. I told them that Jewish Law requires a certain way of killing the chicken. I wanted the Germans to know I was Jewish. ©Phil Drell (Drell, 2008)

Note to the reader: in the third image, Philip is wearing a top hat, kneeling with a sword on the lower right-hand side of the picture. Excluding Drell and the Black soldiers, the rest of the white people in the images were captured Germans. Drell told the German soldiers to smile for the camera. *Images courtesy and permission for use in this OER only, by the Drell family*

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**Black-Germans**

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

Black-Germans suffered under the Nazi regime. As Zane (2019) explained, Black people, who saw themselves as Germans, suffered under the Nazis, were subjected to the Nuremberg Laws, and could be arrested for engaging in relations with white people. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (2022) stated that Blacks were sterilized, subjected to arrest, prohibited from becoming involved with white Germans and even banned from performing in public venues excepting state-mandated propagandistic films. Additionally, Zane (2019) revealed that under Nazi rule, Black-Germans became stateless and prohibited from most work and education. Children also suffered.

After 1941, Black children – and adults – as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (2022) further explained, were not allowed to attend schools in Germany. Black children, teenagers, and adults, as Zane (2019) revealed, were forced to undergo sterilization beginning in 1937, stating that an estimated 385 Black-Germans were sterilized. Zane explained that the

sterilized people were then forced to sign documents that mandated that they not engage in sexual relations with any whites or marry a white German. Black-Germans were also subjected to public atrocities.

Reucher (2019) related the story of Theodor Wonja Michael, born in Germany in 1925, to a mother who was a white German and a father who was Cameroonian. For decades, predating the Nazis in Germany and other countries, Reucher (2019) explained, Black-Germans and people of other races were displayed in zoos, as Michael's parents forced him and his siblings to do. Further,

> as a young boy, Theodor Wonja Michael also had to perform in raffia skirts as a "typical African." It was a terrible time for him and his siblings, he told DW in a 2017 interview: "People would smell me to check if I was real and talked to me in broken German or with signs. Michael's family was torn apart after the death of his mother when he was only a one-year-old. A court determined that the father couldn't properly raise his four children, and operators of a human zoo officially became young Theodor's foster parents in the 1920s. "Their only interest in us was for our labor" Michael said (Reucher, 2019, paras. 5-6).

Additionally, Reucher (2019) noted that Michael spoke about how once the Nazis came to power, Black-German rights were further eroded, and it was the Nuremberg Laws that banned him and other Blacks from going to school; Michael recounted that to avoid being charged with racial violations, he avoided all contact with whites. However, when Michael found work as an actor under the film offices of Joseph Goebbels, the *Reichsminister für Propaganda* [Reich Minister for Propaganda], Black-German actors could then interact with whites, but only for supervised filmic purposes.

Goebbels's office routinely cast Black-German actors in propaganda films, as Michael had been, which the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (2022) also discussed, relating that "a notable exception to the ban was made for the film industry. Black men, women, and children were allowed to appear in propaganda films which served the purpose of promoting the Nazi worldview" (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2022, para. 37). However, outside of filmic interactions under strict guidelines, avoidance of whites was necessary for the survival of

Black-Germans, as Michael could have been arrested, forcibly sterilized, or even killed.

Often Black people in Germany went missing, with a fate unknown; Zane (2019) noted that dozens of Black-Germans were sent to Nazi camps, including Dachau, the first Nazi concentration camp. Black-Germans were classified by the Nazis as asocial and subjected to racial laws that targeted Jews, Roma, and others. Was it a goal of the Nazis to kill all Black-Germans or Blacks residing in Nazi-occupied countries? Zane suggested that sometime in 1942, Heinrich Himmler, "one of the architects of the Holocaust, ordered a census of the Black people living in Germany. This could indicate the beginnings of a plan of mass murder, though no such plan was ever put in place" (Zane, 2019, para. 44), suggesting to us that in the scaffolding of Nazi intent, Blacks were to be possibly exterminated after the Jews and others were eliminated.

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# Black-American GIs and the Nazis

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

As the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (2023) explained, Black-Americans had relatively more freedom in the Weimar Republic than in the United States, as Jim Crow laws did not exist. However, once the Nazis came to power on 30 January 1933, it was no longer safe for Black-Americans to be in Nazi Germany because of racial laws against Jews, Blacks, and other people, including the Roma. When the Nuremberg Laws were passed in September 1935, it was virtually impossible for Black-Americans to find work or to live in peace and security.

However, some Black-Americans went to Germany in the 1930s, including W.E.B. Du Bois, who visited in 1936, the same year Nazi Germany held the Summer Olympics. Du Bois was struck by the fact that "life was less restrictive for him as a Black visitor in Nazi Germany than it was for him in many parts of the United States." (USHMM, 2023, para. 14). Du Bois, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (2023) further explained, wrote a column about antisemitism in Nazi Germany, exposing

what was happening in the country, but as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum related, his experiences intersected with the racism he faced in his country of residence, the United States. Once the war began, everything shifted, and no Black-American resident in Nazi Germany or Black Allied soldier would indeed be safe if captured by the Nazis. Black-Germans and some Black-Americans were ostracized, punished severely, and sent to concentration camps.

During the Second World War, if captured by the Axis, Nazi Germany, Black-American GIs were persecuted, tortured, and murdered by the German Armed Forces and members of the SS; yet, their stories have typically not been present in more extensive scholarship. When the book *Breath of Freedom* was published, it was groundbreaking because it covered the history of over 1,000,000 Black-American soldiers who fought to liberate the world from the Axis when the US Armed Forces were still segregated. Significantly, historians, Denise George and Robert Child noted that the German Army killed eleven Black-American

soldiers, and the United States government allegedly hid the truth about their deaths for over seventy years:

> more than seven decades ago, on December 17, 1944, eleven Black-American GIs, were butchered in an isolated cow pasture in Wereth, Belgium, by a four-man German patrol of the 1st SS Division. Two months later, on February 15, a twelve-year-old Belgian boy, Hermann Langer, discovered the frozen bodies rotting in the melting snow. When U.S. officials examined the remains, they found multiple stab wounds, gouged eyes, shattered skulls, broken bones, and severed fingers, injuries meant to torture the men before the final kill. The dead men's pockets contained small bibles, letters and photographs from loved ones, a silver cross, and a broken diamond engagement ring. After a four-day investigation, Col. Burton Ellis closed the files, marking them "secret," and burying them in the National Archives, where they gathered dust for 70 years. No one was ever brought to justice for the crimes. Their tragedy was omitted from the final congressional war Crimes Report of 1949, which recorded the names of all massacred victims-both civilian and military-and where each crime took place. (George & Child, 2017, para. 1)

Höhn (2008) argued that while white Americans were mainly quick to condemn Hitler and Nazi racism, most did nothing to fight against Jim Crow. The continuation of the denunciation of what the Axis was doing, yet the American silence on the treatment of Black-Americans at home, was a shame on society.

Moreover, as Höhn (2008) and Dickerson (2019) explained, in the United States, Black-American Gis were chosen specifically because of their race for medical experimentation in which included barbaric chemical experiments. Dickerson (2019) revealed that the American military had gas chambers, where 60,000 Black-American Gis (Puerto Rican and Japanese-Americans were also victimized in this way) were interred in the chambers, and then poisons such as mustard gas were released; when and if the men survived, their bodies were tested for the reactions that the gasses had on their skins. Note that the Nazis also used gas chambers and killed millions in this way. Consider then, after the war ended,

> the military occupation of Germany by American troops elicited two striking responses that were organized around irony and issues of race. One came from Germans, who noted with incredulity and derision that they were being democratized by a nation … with a host of antimiscegenation laws at home. The second came from African American Gis who, in their interactions with Germans, were stunned by the apparent absence of racism in the formerly fascist land and, comparing their reception with treatment by white Americans, experienced their stay there as unexpectedly liberatory. Both responses criticized the glaring gap between democratic American principles and practices; both exposed as false the universalist language employed by the United States government to

> celebrate and propagate its political system and social values at home and abroad (Fehrenbach, 2005, p. 17).

Thus, we can conclude Germany was now a nation that was rid of Hitler and was, on its surface, more accepting of Black-American GIs than the country they served: the United States of America.

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## Unit Eleven: Liberation

We start our examination of the liberators with two remembrances of Philip Drell, followed by a biography of General George Patton.

### Philip Drell: A Remembrance

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

I first met Philip and Wini Drell at an exhibition of Mr. Drell's photographs at Roosevelt University. Drell would often come to Oakton and show his images of World War Two. These images were taken from when he was in the U.S. Army as part of the SPECOU unit. The SPECOU unit had special orders from General Dwight D. Eisenhower. What this meant was that the SPECOU unit was unattached to a specific unit and could, as Drell said at a lecture at Oakton, go anywhere "where the action was."

He was a master photographer, capturing the world through his lens, from Camp Henry Horner to World War Two. Drell documented the liberation of the beaches in Normandy, France, to the liberation of camps and Berlin's fall. He used both moving and still film to document what he witnessed. Drell had said that after

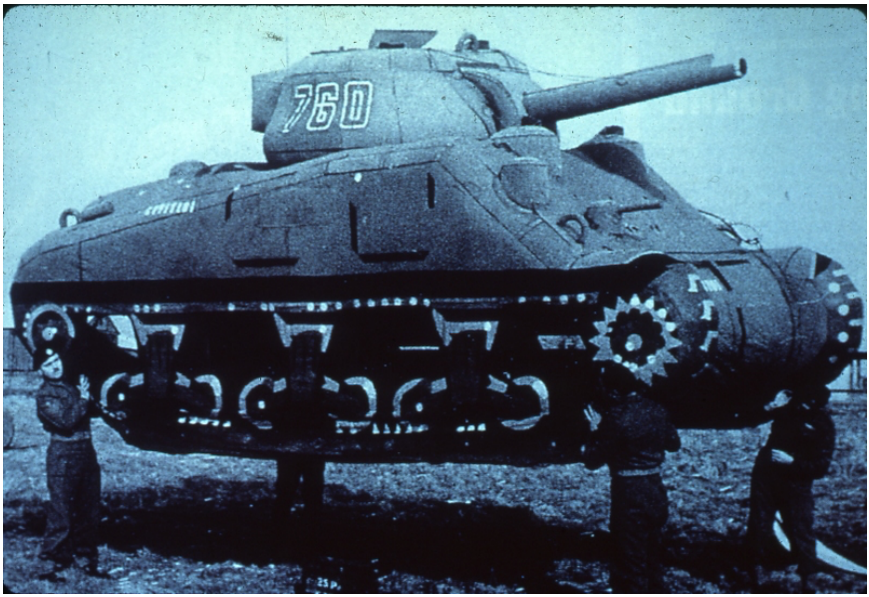
filming the war, the motion picture film was immediately sent back to the U.S. government. However, he took still images of his witness, which formed the basis for many exhibitions and student presentations.

I loved hearing his stories, especially the ones about then-Senator John F. Kennedy and Hollywood star Doris Day. Day was in Chicago for a movie premiere, Drell recalled, but would not leave her hotel suite unless someone could watch her pets (some adopted from a Chicago shelter). A fan club member was called, agreed to watch Day's pets, and the premiere went on.

Drell also had great stories about Lester and Ernest Hemingway, his friend Irwin Shaw, and many other famous figures such as George Stevens Sr., Joe Byrock, and Irwin Moffettt. He documented an attempted assassination attempt on General Charles de Gaulle. On the 25th of August 1944, the day that Paris was liberated, Drell also took the surrender of several hundred German soldiers in Paris, speaking Yiddish to them while holding up his camera. Irwin Shaw wrote a book called *Paris, Paris.* In this book, Shaw documented how Drell, all alone, took

the surrender of this group of German soldiers. Drell had told the Germans – in Yiddish – to walk out slowly so that he could take their pictures. Drell also told students how he took part in another surrender of German troops in the south of France. There was a meal being served to the German troops, and in that context of the surrender and the dinner, Drell revealed he was Jewish.

After his passing, I have continually included his slides in lectures in tribute to him to honor Drell. I also show *D-Day to Berlin*, a documentary that highlights the SPECOU unit's work, also known as the Stevens Irregulars, that Drell was part of. The man in charge of the SPECOU unit was George Stevens, who directed dozens of films, notably *Giant* and *The Diary of Anne Frank*. If you ever watch *D-Day to Berlin*, look for Drell reading *Life* or in many other scenes. Hundreds of students have seen his work through my lens, and I try my best to recall minutiae as Drell presented it. He also loved to read, and as I have many of his books, I think he would be pleased to know how many students have benefited from them. Here follows a few of Drell's images, with annotations by the Drell family:




Inflatable decoy tank in England before invasion of France for the Ghost Army

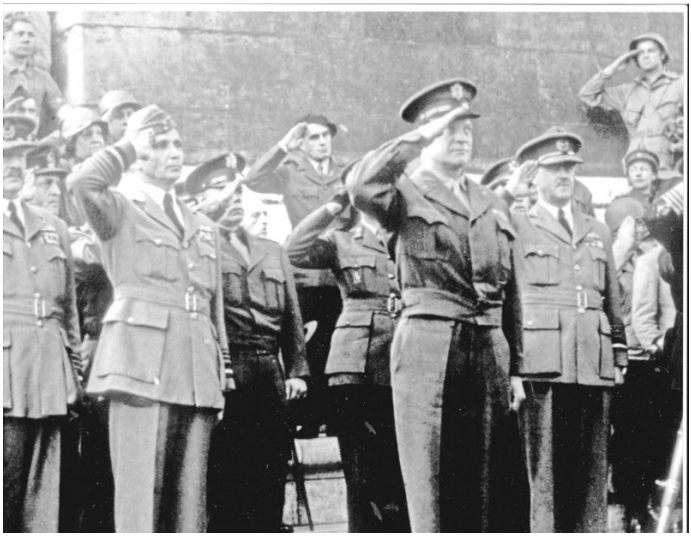
*Courtesy and permission for use in this OER only, the Drell family*

Invasion, Normandy

*Courtesy and permission for use in this OER only, the Drell family*

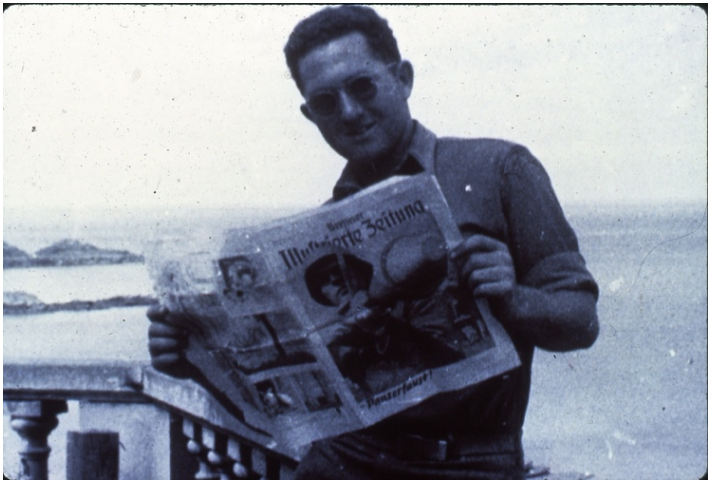
U.S. Generals (l-r) George Patton and Omar Bradley, with Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, after D-Day
*Courtesy and permission for use in this OER only, the Drell family*

France, Philip Drell's group: Driver (unknown), Phil, Irwin Shaw and Pinckney Ridgell (the other photographer)
*Courtesy and permission for use in this OER only, the Drell family*



General Dwight D. Eisenhower and other military officials and members from other branches of Allied forces, France, after victory at Normandy,1944

*Courtesy and permission for use in this OER only, the Drell family*




Philip Drell, late 1944

*Courtesy and permission for use in this OER only, the Drell family*

George Stevens Sr. and Irwin Shaw before retaking Paris
*Courtesy and permission for use in this OER only, the Drell family*

Chicago Soldier Captures
600 Nazis with a Camera
The story of an Army photogra-
the French newspaper quoted
Drell as saying.

Chicago newspaper headline of Philip of he alone taking the surrender of 600 Nazis … with a camera.
*Courtesy and permission for use in this OER only, the Drell family*

Philip Drell's hand holding a card in front of his camera at the liberation of Dachau *Courtesy and permission for use in this OER only, the Drell family*

Liberation of Dachau concentration camp, with Philip Drell taking a picture of other Gis coming across train cars of the victims of the Nazis. *Courtesy and permission for use in this OER only, the Drell family*

Philip Drell at the liberation of Dachau *Courtesy and permission for use in this OER only, the Drell family*

One of my students, Ameen Khan, was especially interested in Philip Drell's work. Ameen had an idea to honor Drell. He put together a photographic exhibit displayed at Oakton's Skokie campus. In May of 2019, along with a presentation by Magda Brown, a dear friend, and a survivor, Ameen presented his work on Drell. His wife Wini, and his daughter Robi, are my dear friends and graciously agreed to spend time with Ameen to review his presentation. Here are Ameen's recollections of that day. The picture of the camera is one that Drell used to document the war gifted to Ameen from the Drell family.

# Philip Drell: The Liberator and Documentarian

*Ameen Khan*

The Holocaust was an extremely dark period of time when millions of Jewish and other peoples were oppressed, tortured, and viciously murdered. Adolf Hitler, Germany's Nazi party leader, and his soldiers carried out one of the largest mass genocides in history. They brutally tortured millions of Jewish people before they would mercilessly murder them. While today we have a great deal of information on what exactly transpired during the Holocaust and the horrors that came of it, it is impossible truly to put into words the senseless and barbaric actions that took place during World War II. The most valuable documentation of the Holocaust we have is the powerful, heart-wrenching photographs that remind us how important it is never to forget the events that

transpired between the years 1938-1945. While the Holocaust was a dark and horrific period of time, it also serves as a reminder that there is good in people, even in the darkest of times. There were many heroes during the Holocaust that risked their own lives, intending to rescue as many Jewish people as possible. One of these heroes was a man named Philip Drell, a photographer during the Holocaust, who will always be remembered for his bravery and selflessness during a very dark period of time.

Philip Drell, born in Chicago, IL, in 1919, was assigned to the Special Motion Pictures Coverage Unit (SPECOU) when he was enlisted in the army back in September of 1942. Philip Drell was assigned to film and document special events such as the Battle of the Bulge and the liberation of Paris. A few weeks after the liberation of Paris, Philip Drell and his unit went to capture photographs of Allied troops surrounding 20,000 Germans. The Germans refused to surrender and took Philip Drell and his unit in as guests for a week. While Philip Drell was in the care of the German army, he was strong-willed and wanted them to know that he was of the Jewish faith. However, it was not until Philip Drell's

unit moved through France and into Germany after they had documented the invasion of Normandy that he would witness the horrors of the Holocaust. On April 29, 1945, Philip Drell and his unit arrived at the liberation of the Dachau concentration camp. He took photographs in the Dachau concentration camps and witnessed some of the most unspeakable acts of violence that no one should ever have to witness. Some of the photographs that he had captured depicted hundreds of dead bodies of Jewish prisoners piled upon each other. It is estimated that 25,000 people died at the Dachau concentration camp. While extremely difficult to look at, the photographs themselves are essential pieces of history that show us honestly how much pain and suffering Jewish people had to endure during the Holocaust.

After years of being mentally and physically tortured by Hitler and the Nazi regime, the Jewish prisoners of Dachau were liberated by the U.S. Seventh Army's 45th Infantry Division in April of 1945. The concentration camp was filled with thousands of dead bodies; however, there were roughly 30,000 survivors that were liberated, many of whom were severely malnourished. Philip

Drell, along with his SPECOU unit, spent time documenting the horrors that had taken place at the camp.

One of the photographs that Philip Drell captured was of a Nazi guard that was beaten to death by one of the liberated prisoners in the act of rage. The amount of emotional and physical abuse that these prisoners were put through is unfathomable. Another photograph that Philip Drell managed to capture, shortly after the liberation, was a truckload of bread for the survivors. Unfortunately, due to severe malnourishment, some of them could not tolerate solid food and died as a result. Since many could not tolerate the bread, they were given soup to nourish them for a while. Unfortunately, many of the liberated survivors still did not survive due to the extreme torture that they had suffered.

During my time at Oakton College, I can without a doubt say that taking Professor Adelé-Marie's, *History of the Holocaust* course was one of the best decisions I have ever made. Before taking this course, I had a fundamental understanding of the events that transpired during the Holocaust; however, after taking this

course, it has immensely expanded my knowledge of the subject and changed how I view certain things.

Whenever I thought about the Holocaust, I associated everything and everyone with as completely evil without having a broader understanding of it. This course taught me that even in the darkest of times, people such as Philip Drell would do anything they can to shed some light on the atrocities humans can perpetrate. In 2019, I had the privilege of creating and displaying memorial artwork that showcased a few of the photographs that Philip Drell captured during the Holocaust. I also had the honor of meeting and speaking to the wife and daughter of Philip Drell, Wini and Robi Drell, who could not have been more helpful and gracious with their time. Finally, I want to thank Professor Adelé-Marie, Wini Drell, and Robi Drell for taking the time out of their busy schedules and answering any questions on Philip Drell. Philip Drell is a man who will always be remembered for his courage, bravery, and selflessness. He serves as a reminder that good people will shine their light even in the darkest of times.

U.S. Army Signal Corps. 1945. Faithful friend mourns American hero: General George S. Patton, Jr.'s dog "Willie" waiting beside the late general's personal effects. Photograph. Record Group 111, National Archives Identifier 535940. National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.

**Patton: Building of a Great Military Leader**

*Brian D. Naimola*

General George S. Patton Jr. was a complicated leader. He had the talent to motivate and inspire soldiers like no other leader, but he also had the temperament to degrade and go against the norm. He had a flair for leadership that was direct and bordered on unforgiving; nevertheless, he truly cared for his soldiers. His rigid toughness and self-sacrifice prompted pride

within his command. However, his aggressive acts and volatile temper led to many controversies throughout his career. He was a religious man who read the Bible often and could recite many passages, but his frequent use of profanity was unparalleled. Although these complications may be accurate, General Patton's earlier life built an incomparable leader.

The building blocks of General Patton's early childhood established his leadership characteristics. His family upbringing is the primary building block, followed by his educational experiences. Building on that foundation, he continued to add leadership responsibilities throughout his career. Patton established and continually refined his unique set of leadership characteristics. These leadership characteristics eventually allowed Patton to become a great military leader.

**Early Life**

George S. Patton Jr. was born to an affluent family and enjoyed a privileged upbringing. Early in his life, he had difficulties in reading and writing. Dyslexia and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) potentially contributed to his low ability to read

and write (Blumenson, 1985). Blumenson highlighted that little was known at this time in history about these Learning Disabilities (LD), so Patton was never officially diagnosed with a learning disability. Throughout these early years, his aunt and parents devoted a significant amount of time reading to him and telling him stories. Many of these stories involved the discussions of his military foregathers and the Bible (Blumenson, 1985).

Due to his inability to read and write and not wanting him to have to deal with cruel classmates, Blumenson (1985) also commented that Mama and Papa kept Patton out of the school system until he was 11 years old. At that time, he began his formal education. Patton first attended Steven Cutter Clark's Classical School for Boys, then Virginia Military Institute, and finally, West Point before officially entering the Army (Hirshson, 2002).

***Family***

Family structure and upbringing shape our adult life. Bakhsh et al. (2018) observed that personal traits mature when parents oversee the child's learning. Vries and Treacy (1999) asserted that early years and family are significant life factors that

significantly influence personal characteristics, notably leadership capabilities. Patton's family life helped form the distinctive leadership style he exercised later in life.

**Aunt Annie (Nannie).** One of the more unusual fixtures in the Patton house was Patton's Aunt Nannie. When Ruth Wilson married George Patton II, her sister, Annie, affixed herself to the married couple and became like a surrogate mother and spoiled the young Patton (The National Interest, 2020). Nannie was the Patton household dictatorial ruler and did not allow Patton to be punished, as reported by The National Interest (2020). The National Interest also observes that Nannie read the Bible to Patton for up to four hours daily. From these readings, Jesus emerged as the prototypical example of human courage.

**Mother.** Ruth Wilson (Mama) hailed from an affluent family and married George Patton II on December 10, 1884 (Hirshson, 2002). The bond between Mama and son was not as strong as the bond he shared with Papa. Nightly, Patton gave his mother one good night kiss but then showered his father with many kisses (Blumenson, 1985). Mama was very protective of her son

and did not want Patton to go to school until later than most children in an attempt to shield him from being ridiculed for his lack of reading and writing abilities.

**Father.** George Patton II (Papa) was a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) before making his way to California with his wife, Ruth. Hirshson (2002) note that Patton's father spent several terms as the district attorney of Los Angeles and had ineffective attempts at running for other public offices, including one as a Congressional Democratic candidate. When Patton was born in 1885, Papa gave up practicing law and took over his father-in-law's business to save it from another relative's mishandling.

Blumenson (1985) reported that there was a healthy and close bond between Papa and his son. He pointed out that Patton would wield a wooden sword that Papa had carved for him, and the two would play soldiers often. Also, every day, Papa would salute Patton and ask how the private was doing. Papa taught Patton how to ride a horse in the horse saddle from which his late Grandfather, Colonel George S. Patton, was fatally wounded during the Civil

War. Papa also spent much time reading to him from Greek Mythology, William Shakespeare, and Sir Walter Scott, and he would also tell military stories based on his ancestry (Blumenson, 1985).

***Military Influences at a young age***

Due to Patton's early life's influence, Patton believed that he would be a General someday, predisposed by his father's stories of the heroic ancestors that preceded Patton. Blumenson (1985) points out that Papa was an excellent storyteller and would speak of extravagant and possibly inflated tales of his forefathers, including Robert Patton, a Brigadier General, a friend of George Washington who fought in the Revolutionary War. Also, he would speak of the six great-uncles who were Confederate Soldiers in the Civil War; and their brother, Patton's Grandfather, who was fatally wounded while fighting with his troops. In addition to these great Patton soldiers, Blumenson also suggests that there were several of Patton's cousins that Papa would tell tales of who held high ranks within the military. Papa also had a short military career. Through

all of these real-life heroes, Papa was able to tell the tales of war, courage, and gallantry.

Mama's side of the family also contributed to Patton's military influences. The National Interest (2020) indicates that among the living military benchmarks was Patton's step-grandfather, Colonel George Hugh Smith, whose accounts of the Civil War introduced a deep sense of purpose in Patton. Blumenson (1985) observes that Smith might have been the most significant influence on Patton's determination to become a soldier and continue the family's military heritage. Blumenson (1985) states that Patton idolized his military forefathers, and what Patton feared the most was to discredit himself in their eyes by coming up short of their standards.

***Schooling***

Besides what a student learns from books, schools shape how students act, what they are, and whom they will grow into over a period of time. Riley (2019) notes that a student's ability to fit into school is "shaped by what they bring to it – their histories, their day-to-day lived realities – as well as schools' practices and

expectations" (p. 96). Different types of environments enable students to experience various kinds of learning and different experiences for students. Patton experienced an eclectic range of schooling experiences, including homeschooling, private school, and military education. Even with his learning disabilities, he survived the rigors of schooling.

**Learning Disabilities.** Merriam-Webster (2020) defines dyslexia as "a learning disability involving difficulties in acquiring and processing language typically manifested by a lack of proficiency in reading, spelling, and writing." Hirshson (2002) explains that Patton could neither read nor write until he was almost twelve years old. However, Patton could recite from memory Bible passages, poetry, and large portions of history. Dyslexia is not just a matter of inverting letters and numbers but is a complex condition whose symptoms include hyperactivity, intolerance, attitude swings, and recklessness. In a letter Patton wrote to his future wife, while he was a West Point Cadet, he called attention to his dyslexia, saying, "it is beastly hard for me to learn" (Dietrich, 1989, p. 389). Patton recognized his reading and

writing limitations while in school, but he continued to push himself to overcome and eventually became an avid reader.

Blumenson (1985) also emphasizes that Patton had another learning disability, which eventually came to be known as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), a neurological-chemical condition. Merriam-Webster (2020) notes that individuals with ADD show signs of hyperactivity and impulsivity. The National Interest (2020) points out that other ADD symptoms include compulsiveness, extreme mood swings, and bad tempers. Patton exhibited these symptoms even at an early age. Costello and Stone (2012) maintain that individuals with these learning disabilities tend to avoid events where they feel inadequate and become frustrated but overcompensate these issues by achieving in other areas. Blumenson (1985) suggests that Papa and Mama hired tutors to help Patton overcome his learning disabilities. Once they were comfortable with his reading and writing abilities, they sent him to private school.

**Private school.** Dietrich (1989) points out that Patton began his schooling at Stephen Clark's Classical School for Boys.

Patton spent six years getting an excellent private school education fulfilling his high school requirements. He was a hardworking student who struggled with many of his subjects because of his dyslexia. Dietrich also pointed out that Patton meticulously made many annotations throughout his books, possibly to make up for his dyslexia.

**Military schools.** After graduating from Stephen Clark's Classical School for Boys, Patton went on to VMI for one year. Blumenson and Hymel (2008) note that at VMI, Patton was in "Patton country," as VMI is where his father and Grandfather and six of his great uncles had all attended school. The National Interest (2020) emphasizes that even with Patton's average school record at the Classical School for Boys, it was a given that Patton would be admitted into VMI as there had been a Patton presence at VMI since its founding.

Patton started to come into his own at VMI. The college's atmosphere was an excellent opportunity to begin acclimating to the military mindset. What he did at VMI would pave his way to West Point. National Interest (2020) also pointed out that even

though his academic grades were average, he was applying himself with passion, and his military work surpassed his VMI classmates. Blumenson and Hymel (2008) pointed out how hard Papa worked his political allies to include Judge Harry Lee and Senator Barb to get Patton's appointment to West Point. Like his time at VMI, Blumenson and Hymel also remark that after getting to West Point, Patton excelled in the military aspects but was just middle of the road from an academic point of view.

Leeman (2015) indicates that Patton had a few setbacks in his first year, as he failed mathematics and then had to repeat a year. Leeman also noted that Patton was demoted from First Corporal to Sixth Corporal after failing to follow directions and protocol by putting more of his men on report than his fellow Corporals. Even with these setbacks, Patton was coming into his element and eventually graduated with West Point's second-highest rank of corporal adjutant (National Interest, 2020). Patton's unique decisions and break in protocol while at West Point began to establish his leadership style that would be evident throughout the remainder of his military career

## Leadership

Leadership is complex to explain with a singular definition. The understanding of leadership is generally known; however, no two descriptions are precisely the same. To search for the "definition of leadership," on April 11, 2020, Google yielded about 1,800,000,000 results. In its purest form, Merriam-Webster (2020) defines leadership as "the act or an instance of leading." Even though leadership is unique to every person, some common ways and characteristics define the term.

## Military Leadership

There are specific military leadership characteristics that have demonstrated themselves time and again. The Army defines leadership as "the process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization" (Department of the Army, 2019, p. 1–3). The military builds and continuously refines individuals' leadership skills. Patton exemplified these sound leadership characteristics.

## Leadership Characteristics

Leadership characteristics are traits that define successful leaders. Leaders need to perfect and cultivate these characteristics to have an impact on the individuals they lead. Successful leaders must possess these traits to reach the highest levels of leadership. Patton uniquely epitomized these leadership characteristics.

### *Maxwell's Leadership Attributes*

In *Developing the Leader Within You 2.0*, John Maxwell (2018) identified eight components of leadership characteristics that define a leader's success. Possessing these characteristics can make the difference between ordinary leaders and great leaders. He observes that "leadership can be developed" (p. ix). Some individuals are born with these characteristics, but Patton developed these traits and refined them throughout his life.

**Influence.** Maxwell (2018), in quoting John C. Georges, "Leadership is the ability to obtain followers" (p. 3). If no one wants to follow a leader in the first place, they are not a true leader. The ability to influence is to affect the actions and opinions of others into following. It is also about understanding what motivates individuals and using that understanding to leverage their

performance. When looking at leadership as the ability to influence others towards achieving a common goal, it becomes apparent that influence is the foundation of leadership. Patton had a fantastic ability to influence his soldiers. Major Isaac White illustrates this:

> [Patton] really inspired everybody with the idea that when you have gone just as far as you can go, you can still go a little bit further. You might not have loved him, but you respected him and admired him, and you wanted to put out for him. Every unit in the division developed a very fierce and intense pride in its accomplishments. (as cited in Axelrod, 1999, p.183)

Leaders must lead from the front and motivate their Soldiers to follow.

Major White's analysis shows the epitome of Patton's ability to obtain followers. Patton's men believed that when a person gives their all, they always had more to deliver. Patton understood how to motivate and get the most out of the Soldiers. Patton led by example and would not put his soldiers in a position that he felt they could not win. Patton always showed pride in his organizations. Patton's pride was infectious, causing his soldiers to follow him into intense war situations out of personal satisfaction and dedication.

**Priorities.** Maxwell (2018) notes that leaders look forward and prioritize requirements. Thought-out priorities enable leaders to ascertain the most significant priorities and where they need to focus their attention. Successful leaders prioritize based on the following principles:

***Smarter over Harder.*** Working smarter over harder generally means thinking through projects to minimize steps so that individuals are using their time effectively. Maxwell (2018) notes that it is "finding better ways to work and making the most of the moments you have" (p. 30). Williamson (2009) summed up Patton's working smarter, not harder mentality in remembering Patton's words "When you make a mistake in war, the punishment is death! The trouble in your mistake could cause hundreds of soldiers to die" (p.54). It is better to teach the team the best way to work, not to lose productivity from a leadership perspective. The emphasis should be on focusing on the proper requirements at the right time or experiencing consequences in the long run.

***You Can't Have It All.*** Maxwell (2018) notes that to be successful, individuals need to make tough choices and prioritize.

Axelrod (1999) alludes to the "you cannot have it all" theme with a Patton quote of "A good plan, violently executed now, is better than a perfect plan next week" (p. 130). As a General Officer with the responsibility of thousands of soldiers, Patton often had to make judgments based on what information was available at that time. However, he knew he had to decide and execute the best he could with the limited information; otherwise, the enemy would have an opportunity to destroy them. Leadership is about establishing a level of balance.

***Best over Good.*** Maxwell (2018) observes that sometimes leaders need to forego the good and go for the best. Axelrod (1999) establishes that Patton lectured, "Man is the only war machine. Always remember that man is the only machine that can win the war. It's nice to have good equipment, but man is the key" (p. 145). Patton understood that the best thing he had going for him was his Soldiers. With all the technology in the world, men are still required to use that technology.

***Proactive over Reactive.*** Maxwell (2018) highlights that "to be an effective leader, you need to be proactive" and also notes

that “reactive means losing” (p. 32). Axelrod (1999) highlights a proactive versus reactive Patton leadership characteristic quote in “We are not going to dig any foxholes and wait for the enemy to come shootin’ at us. We will be shootin’ at them first” (p.53). From the quote, Patton shows that he is about pushing forward and not allowing his soldier to sit back and react. Patton’s leadership philosophy showed that attacking the problem and being proactive encourages the soldiers to move and progress.

**Character.** Maxwell (2018) notes that within a character is trust and that “trust is a relationship between a trustor and a trustee” (p. 53). Without trust, even if people follow a leader today, they will not follow for long. With as brash as Patton was, he built an extreme level of trust within his organizations. He had the highest confidence and trust in his soldiers to accomplish his audacious goals. Williamson (2009) pointed out that Patton would say this about soldiers, “they will not trust you if you do not trust them” (p. 31). Trust is a critical component of character and goes to show that trust is a two-way street.

**Positive Change.** People are not generally opposed to change; they tend to refrain from being changed (Maxwell, 2018). Change requires individuals to get out of their safe havens and face new circumstances. Williamson (2009) related a story of Patton and the necktie order with the I Armored Corps. Before Patton took over command of the I Armored Corps, the soldiers were a ragtag bunch that did not wear proper uniforms. Patton wanted his soldiers to have pride in themselves and knew the change should start with appearance. He lectured to the troops that pride builds confidence, confidence builds courage, and courage builds a significant level of bravery. Immediately all soldiers were dressed better than the average soldier, which gave them the pride and strength to walk tall. A key to successfully implementing positive change is that leaders ensure they communicate ahead of time the change's goal and why it is happening. Patton was successful in communicating and thus built a strong band of soldiers.

**Problem Solving.** Successful leaders allow for problem-solving at the lowest level (Maxwell, 2018). Leaders need to know how to solve the issues and prioritize them, but more notably, they

need to delegate them. So, the task of a leader is to build confidence in individuals to handle issues for themselves. Two notable Patton quotes that epitomize his leadership belief in allowing for problem-solving at the lowest level is “never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do, and they will surprise you with their ingenuity” and “if you tell people where to go, but not how to get there, you’ll be amazed at the results” (Axelrod, 1999, pp. 165 & 167). These quotes showed that Patton had trust in his soldiers. He was willing and confident to let his staff solve problems creatively at the lowest possible level through his military knowledge.

**Attitude.** Maxwell (2018) notes that a “leader’s attitude must exemplify resolve, tenacity, focus, determination, and commitment” (p. 121). It is an attitude that motivates and ultimately sustains success. Axelrod (1999) highlighted a Patton quote that sums up his ideals with “we will win because we will never lose. There can never be defeat if a man refuses to accept defeat” (p. 55). The attitude of a leader is what will drive the team to success versus failure. Successful leaders understand that the

correct attitude will set the right tone, enabling the team's best response.

**Serving People.** Maxwell (2018) notes that "leadership is based on serving others, not ourselves" (p. 146). Great leaders serve their followers. A common theme in the Army is that if leaders take care of their soldiers, the soldiers will, in turn, support their leader. Williamson (2009) explained how Patton was always concerned about all his soldiers regardless of their rank or assignment. He also points out how Patton was adamant about his soldiers not having to do things that were not essential to the mission. Servant leaders provide growth and opportunities for others. Axelrod (1999) pointed out that Patton believed in training a person to do his job then getting out of the way. Successful leaders prepare followers to take over their job.

**Vision.** A vision focuses on the future of the organization. Successful leaders have a vision of what they have to accomplish in supporting the mission. Maxwell (2018) explains that vision sets the direction for which the team will follow. Patton was able to inspire his troops by proclaiming his vision in a style that only he

could do. “The very thought of losing is hateful to Americans. An army is a team. It lives, eats, sleeps, and fights as a team. This individuality stuff is a bunch of bullshit” (Axelrod, 1999, p. 4). Great leaders know how to inspire a team through a vision, and from that, they motivate others to follow.

**Liberation**

Patton was not only a complicated leader; he was also a complicated human being. Patton was not very sympathetic to the Jewish community, but much credit is bestowed upon him in the liberation of the Buchenwald, Mauthausen-Gusen, Dachau, and satellite camps (Laufer, 2018). Laufer explains that as many survivors were near death in these camps, Patton’s Army penetrated deep into German territory and drove the German’s away from the concentration camps.

Buchenwald was the first concentration camp that Patton’s Sixth Armored Division liberated on April 11, 1945, where there were 21,000 known survivors (Hirschman & Hill, 1996). Laufer reported that “Patton was the miracle they prayed for” (p.313). Hirschman and Hill noted that as Patton’s Sixth Armored Division

was driving towards the Buchenwald camp, the Nazis fled, and the concentration camp survivors gathered up the weapons and took control of the camp by 3:15 p.m. The Buchenwald clock tower remains forever fixed at 3:15 p.m., as this was when the camp was liberated (Rodden, 2005). As flawed as General Patton was, many concentration camp survivors are devoted to him as they "thought their lives were certainly over, only to be given a second chance by a magnificent general" (Washington Post, 2014).

**Summary**

Patton's early life shaped who he would become. Patton became one of the most outstanding military leaders ever known. Patton's learning disabilities (dyslexia and ADD), solid family structure, forefathers, and schooling developed Patton into a successful leader. Patton sought excellence and was never satisfied with his performance. Patton's upbringing revolved around an affluent and caring family structure.

Patton was well taken care of by his Papa, Mama, and Aunt Nannie. These family members took much of their time to ensure Patton had a stable upbringing. The family often read and talked to

Patton about his heroic forefathers due to his limited ability to learn. Blumenson (1985) states that Patton thought that genetics plays a role in shaping a leader. Patton also believed that successful military leaders were a blending of lineage and abilities. Patton was not flawless. Numerous faults sometimes tainted his leadership proficiencies, which were of the highest magnitude. Patton rose to be a fantastic but complicated leader when the Army needed a leader with his leadership characteristics. His stern discipline, resilience, and selflessness elicited extraordinary pride within his troops.

Today's Army would not have tolerated Patton, and he would have been relieved from duty before he had to chance to become the military leader he was. Patton was not born to be a leader, but his life's experiences molded him into a great military leader with strong leadership characteristics.

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**Unit Twelve: The Survivors**

## The Survivors

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

In this chapter, we have several first-hand accounts of Holocaust survivors. Two survivors who are no longer with us, but who often spoke to my students, were Magda Brown and Yakov Zakon. I know that they would love to be a part of this project if they were with us. In their honor, and with the deepest gratitude to our survivor contributors, I present to you their stories, from Deborah, Ralph, Yvonne, Ruth, and Stella. Several have spoken to my students many times, and other testimonies come from their descendants. Following their entries, we have an important contribution on caring for Holocaust survivors from Adam Yunis.

We begin with Deborah, whose parents both survived the Holocaust, and she considers telling their stories a sacred obligation. Following Deborah's story, we have Ralph's miracle survival story, then Stella's, and then Yvonne's incredible story of how she survived as a hidden child. Ruth's survival story ends this section.

## Second Generation Survivor

*Deborah Leonard*

I was born in a Displaced Persons Camp, Landsberg, and came to the US in October 1951. The lessons of resistance, tolerance and hope that I learned from my parents, both survivors, have laid the foundation for how I have lived my life and how I interact with the world around me. These lessons have become increasingly important as our country and the world faces divisive and challenging times. With the Holocaust Survivor Community both aging and dwindling, the children of survivors are obligated to continue to tell their parents' stories.

Being a Second Generation (2G) Survivor has always played a major role in my life. I am the daughter of two Holocaust survivors from Poland. My father's family was among the 800,000 Jews that survived World War II in hard labor camps in the Gulag (Soviet Union and Siberia). Of the 3800 Jews from Tyszowicz, my father's town, only 32 remained after the war. My mother was from Hrbeiszow near the Ukrainian border. She was only eleven years old when the war broke out and spent most of the next four

years as a hidden child in the forest and in barns, surviving on what she could gather and constantly moving from one place to another. Of thee 11,750 Jews in Hrbeiszow, only 176 remained after the war.

In Poland, only 10% of the prewar 3.3 million Jewish population survived. My parents were a part of this small group of survivors. Introduced by mutual friends after the war, my parents married in June of 1946 in the transient town of Waldenberg, on the Polish-German border, with the intent to travel to Landsberg, a German Displaced Persons (DP) Camp and then on to the United States. However, as a result of their sponsor in the US dying, they were forced to spend five years in Germany in four different DP Camps. They did not arrive in the US until October 1951.

There is much to talk about my parents' survival story during the war. However, of late, I realized that there is an equally amazing story of the resilience, hope, and optimism that are part of their story in the DP camps and their arrival in the United States. My parents, like other survivors, used their time in the DP Camps to start new families, have children and celebrate Shabbat and

Jewish holidays. All the DP camps had schools (for both children and adults), synagogues, theatres, newspapers and libraries. These resilient people were doing their very best to lead normal lives. Keep in mind that some of these DP camps had been Nazi concentration camps.

In October 1951, when my parents finally arrived in the US, their "hit the ground running" attitude followed them. They got jobs, sent their kids to school and immediately became active members in their communities, including going to night school to learn English and become American citizens. My father worked extremely hard and eventually became a business owner.

The lessons from my parents' lives are with me on a daily basis. Their optimism and resilience have especially guided me during the Covid-19 pandemic. These lessons have become increasingly important as our country, and the world faces divisive and challenging times. I also am obligated to raise my voice against any kind of bigotry, including antisemitism. Eli Wiesel's quote is even more meaningful and powerful today. "Never be silent, neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence

encourages the tormentor." If you see some, say something has become a core value that we must all live our lives by.

**Survival Story of Ralph Rehbock**

*Ralph Rehbock*

I was born in July 1934 in Gotha Germany. I am an only child and my parents, and I were living a peaceful and comfortable life in Germany.

Those people who are willing to take a stand, offer tangible evidence that freedom of choice and opportunities to fight injustice exist even in the darkest of times. Without the assistance of five extraordinary upstanders, my personal story would have had a very different ending.

1. **Cousin Max.** By spring 1938, the intensifying pace of laws against the Jews prompted my mother and father to plan to leave our home in Gotha, Germany This was not an easy task. We, and so many others like us, tried to contact family members in the United States. Some were not willing or ablet o help. Thankfully, my mother's cousin Max agreed to prepare the affidavit of support that would sponsor our family of 3 for admission to the United States. That was the only way to be able to be accepted as German JEWISH Refugees into the US. My mother by herself sailed to

America to Hyde Park in Chicago in April 1938 to retrieve and hand carry all of the documents THAT HAD BEEN PREPARED BY MAX --back to the US Consulate in Berlin for THE hopeful ISSUE OF visas. We ultimately received a letter inviting us to come to Berlin for an appointment on November 10.

2. **The House Sitter**. During the evening of Nov. 9, we watched from our Berlin hotel window as fire destroyed the synagogue across the street. ONE OF THE 1400 synagogues torched that night. ANOTHER WAS OURS IN GOTHA. With THE cooperation from the local population, Nazis smashed windows, vandalized storefronts and murdered 91 men. My uncle was one of them. The Nazis also arrested 30,000 Jewish men between the ages of 16 and 60 and sent them to concentration camps. Back at our home in Gotha, the Gestapo came to arrest my father, but a young Jewish girl who was housesitting for us told them she did not know where he was, and they left in disgust. Back in 1933 all Jews were required to register. That is how they knew where every Jew lived.

That evening we received a telephone call from the SITTER at OUR hotel. “The English lesson is canceled," she said. It was A prearranged code meaning, “Do not come home,” and he never did again. All German phones were tapped OF COURSE.

**3. The US Marine.** On Nov. 10, we went to our SCHEDULED appointment at the U.S. Consulate to secure our visas, but paperwork delays required us to return the following day. We did, only to find the consulate closed for “Armistice Day”, the holiday we now call Veterans Day. It was NOV 11 THE DAY THAT WW2 ENDED AT 11AM. A Marine guard standing at the gate, was compassionate to our plight AND tracked down the consul general AT HIS HOME. He went to find AND BRING HIM BACKTO HIS OFFICE.

**4. The Consul General.** Despite the holiday, the consul general returned to his office to complete our visas. His signature meant freedom FOR US. All that was left was getting out of Germany.

**5. The Stranger.** My mother and I traveled to the GERMAN/Dutch border where all Jews were forced off the train.

For reasons still unknown, and with all the suspense of an old noir film, a Dutchman -- A TOTAL STRANGER tapped my mother on the shoulder and quietly separated us from the other Jews THAT WERE ALSO WAITING. His signal to us, a slight tip of his hat, told us to follow him to a local train track and board a train to safety in Holland. From Holland we went to England where we were joined by my father, who HAD traveled separately, and on Dec. 15, 1938, we left for the United States on the SS Manhattan which docked on Dec 22ND. I do remember seeing the Statue of Liberty in NY harbor.

We are reminded of our responsibility to each other. We have the moral obligation to take a stand for humanity. We have the power, through actions both big and small, to become upstanders as our five upstanders had been on our behalf.
Our community must defend against those who attack others based on race or religion and unite against antisemitism and all forms of bigotry. Sometimes, the simplest of actions - writing a letter to a congressman, making a phone call to support a cause, showing up

to a rally or event, or tipping a hat to a stranger - can make all the difference in the lives of others.

## My Family and Kharkov

*Stella Sokolovskaya*

According to reports sent to Berlin, Nazi forces murdered 59,018 Jews in the Ukraine during operations there. Bodies were then incinerated or dumped in mass graves. In one such grave outside the city of Kharkov, a ravine called Drobitsky Yar, were approximately fifteen thousand Jews who were murdered on Dec. 15, 1941. Among them were my grandmother Dvoyra, aunt Sonya and cousin Riva. My father also died. Heavy fighting took place in the region near Kharkov, the Ukraine's second largest city. Control of the area shifted four times before the Red Army gained control for the last time with Operation Rumyantsev on Aug. 23, 1943. It was later that year that the Soviets put three captured Germans and one Soviet collaborator on trial.

Unlike the later Nuremburg trials, in which war criminals were prosecuted for "crimes against peace," the Kharkov trial, while not specifying the victims as Jewish citizens, conducted the proceedings against the criminals specifically for their part in killing Soviet citizens. Multiple Nazi army and police units

perpetrated the killing of Jews and others using both guns and carbon monoxide death vans. Death squads would follow the Nazi forces in order to gather and kill Soviet Jews in newly-conquered territory. Once Nazi forces tested carbon monoxide in their operations, the number of vans in use increased throughout the Kharkov region.

By the end of fighting, Soviet Jewish writer Vassily Grossman described the scene at the time that there were no Jews left as every single one had been murdered. The defendants in the Kharkov trial were charged under both international and Soviet law. The Soviets used the Moscow Declaration, in which Allies had agreed that war criminals would be tried for their crimes in the countries where their atrocities occurred. The Kharkov trial was the first trial of Germans by any Allied country and the only trial to take place before Germany's unconditional surrender in May 1945. During the trial, the defendants pleaded guilty to their crimes, but evidence was still offered to both satisfy the court of their guilt and give context for their sentence.

The court sentenced the defendants to death. A reference consulted for the above was Bazyler, M., & Rose Gold, K. (2012). *The Judicialization of International Atrocity Crimes: The Kharkov Trial of 1943*.

## A Hidden Child's Story of Survival: Yvonne Aronson

*Yvonne Aronson*

My journey begins in 1887 when my great grandparents came to America from Vienna Austria. They probably ended up in the ghetto in New York City and that wasn't the life my great grandmother knew in Vienna. My grandmother was born in New York in August 1888 and when she was 2 in 1890 my great grandmother packed herself and her daughter up and went back to Vienna. My great grandfather stayed another year thinking his family would return but when they didn't, he returned to Vienna also and that's how my family was in Europe when Hitler struck in 1938. My mother was engaged to be married and saw to it that both families emigrated to Brussels Belgium which was neutral at that time. My mother had two first cousins-the male went on the last Kindertransport and landed in Montevideo Uruguay and the female ended up being a governess for a Jewish family outside of London.

I was born in Brussels on April 5, 1939. My father and his brother were picked up on the street (everyone had false papers)

and were taken to a labor camp outside Carcassonne France. My mother's sister was also picked up and went directly to Auschwitz and killed upon arrival. My mother, great grandmother, great aunt and I went into a convent. My mother posed as a novice nun but passing out three times after attending when they came up the aisle was made governess of the 25 children in the convent. I was the only one with a parent. My mother took one child every evening and shared the little food we had.

When she found out that the Mother Superior was receiving food packages, she asked her to share them with the children she refused, and my mother and I went back to our apartment where she became very ill. The local pharmacist hid us in his cellar where I sat on a wooden chair holding a doll I had been given by a Belgian friend of my mother's. There was a small window with metal bars at street level and all I could see were people's feet as they walked by. The pharmacist's wife would bring us food and take care of my mother. We were there about 3 months and when my mother recovered, we went briefly back to our apartment until she found a widow and her adult son(through

Belgian underground)who was willing to hide me. They lived in Audergam which was a picturesque suburb-white picket fences, green shutters, pretty gardens. My days were spent picking vegetables in the garden and twice a week we walked to the local cemetery where the widow tended to her husband's grave.

When I went to live with the widow, I was given 5 children's books by the same friend who had given me the doll. Since I had nothing to do and no one with whom I could play I taught myself to read by the time I was 3-1/2. I read and reread those books countless times-that saved me. My mother would come every Sunday and one Sunday there was a streetcar strike, and I was told my mother wouldn't be coming but I knew she would. She walked 15 miles and never missed a Sunday in the 3+ years I was with the widow. Every time she came, I always asked when the war would be over, and my mother said 1945 to appease me. Of course, I cried every time she left. In the meantime, my grandmother landed in New York on April 6,1939, was met by an ex-boyfriend of my mothers who gave her $100 and put her on a greyhound bus to Chicago to meet up with a friend from Vienna.

My grandmother was a princess as she was beautiful, charming and played bridge; she just couldn't boil water.

Her friend got her a job as a cook for a Jewish family, in Hyde Park, at Passover. She made matzo balls from her friend's recipe which turned out to be like hockey pucks! They did improve and we still make them from that recipe. After this job she went to work as a housekeeper for a widower in Glencoe and that was followed by a job as housekeeper/companion to Harriet Adler Wile who was the sister of Max Adler of the Adler Planetarium and the Rosenwald family of the museum of science and industry. When I came back to Brussels, I started kindergarten and had the first friend my own age. I went on to Catholic school because that was the only neighborhood school. During that time my mother would go to the American Consulate in Antwerp several times a month, but it appeared that counsel was antisemitic and made it very difficult to get the necessary papers to emigrate to America. It was finally accomplished, and we left Brussels mid-March 1947.

We brought an orphan with us, who was the niece of my grandmother's friends in Chicago. We went by train to Antwerp,

Copenhagen then by ferry to Gothenburg, Sweden where we boarded our ship to America. It was a very turbulent crossing. My great grandmother crossed the Atlantic for the second time. She was the only person who didn't miss a meal. The morning we sailed into New York Harbor everyone was on deck as we sailed by the Statue of Liberty. That vision is still permanently imprinted in my mind. We were met by my mother's cousin and husband and he took me on double-decker buses all over New York. I got a stiff neck looking at all the tall buildings as there weren't any in Europe at that time. My mother's cousin took me, by train, to meet my grandmother for the first time. It was scary because it was another stranger in my life. It took a couple of days to adapt again. I spoke only French and German-no English.

My mother registered me at Kenwood grammar school where they put me back 2 years because I didn't know English. The teacher was the daughter of German-Jewish immigrants and she took me home 3 days a week and with the help of her parents tutored me. Also, Mrs. Wile tutored me in English 7 days a week and within a month I spoke fluently and with no accent. The

children weren't very nice to me and I didn't have many friends. I graduated in June 1953, went to Hyde Park High School for 2 months and then moved north where I attended Senn High School. I was taken by one girl who introduced me to her friends, and I still have 2 friends from those days. I then went on to university of Illinois navy pier for 3 years. I married in November 1959. I have 3 children: Larry 58 who owns advertising agencies, Richard 56, an attorney and real estate broker, and Lori 52 who is a pediatric anesthesiologist at children's hospital in Cincinnati. I have three grandchildren ages 13-32 and one great grandchild who is eight.

In 1961, (I'm since divorced) my husband and I took a 9-week trip to Europe. I went back to Brussels and saw the widow's son and his family. Sadly, the widow had died in November 1960. It was very strange walking back into that house-nothing had changed except it was part of Brussels proper. When I got to Paris, I tried to find my uncle but without success. When I came back home, we placed an ad in the Aufbau which was a paper geared to immigrants. Within 2 days I heard from my grandfather's brother in San Francisco, his daughter in New York and ultimately my

uncle in Paris. We had a family reunion in Paris and Vienna in 1964 and again in 1966 in Vienna. I went to DC Holocaust museum in 1996 and learned what happened to him. He was on the last transport of 1500 men, women and children taken from France to Auschwitz in February 1944 and was killed January 22, 1945, five days before the Russians liberated Auschwitz.[86] Four years ago, my daughter and her family and I did a family history trip to Vienna, Berlin and Brussels. Vienna and Berlin were fine but because there had been a bombing at the Brussels airport, we had to take two trains from Berlin to Brussels and another train to Amsterdam to fly home. I hired a car in Brussels to take us to all the places where I had grown up. The kindergarten and pharmacy were gone. I consider myself very lucky in my life. I am on the speaker's bureau for the Illinois Holocaust museum which is my way of giving back and is more important now than ever before!

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[86] On 26 March 2021, Adam Yunis discovered that Yvonne's father was in a labor camp in France, then sent to Drancy before his deportation to Auschwitz, on what Adam believes was transport 68. French records may have more information as to his experiences in the labor camp. We will continue to investigate.

# The Testimony of Ruth Neumann Saffro

Produced here with permission of the Kramer family.

Originally recorded August 5th, 1991, by the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center

Transcribed March 22nd, 2025, by her great-grandson, Ethan Kramer

From Ethan: This is a 55-minute-long interview. I have done the best I can to transcribe the interview between my great-grandma and the interviewer. I have included notes. Some parts of the film are missing or damaged, as it is a 33-year-old tape. The time markers are both for ease of finding a place in the video and for me to transcribe it. I am aware of the existence of a second interview. I have not been able to find it yet as of 2025. Thank you for taking the time to watch and/or read this interview. I greatly appreciate that my great grandma's stories are still being passed down through the generations, especially in the current climate, where knowledge of history is ever so important. I have no doubt that my great-grandma appreciates it too.

Thanks again, Ethan Kramer

**START TESTIMONY**

SAFFRO: My name is Ruth Neumann Saffro. I was born on March 22nd, 1922 in Sennfeld,

Germany, which is now Adelsheim-Sennfeld1, Germany, and it's in the south-western part of Germany.

INTERVIEWER: How far back can you trace your family's history in that area?

SAFFRO: To 1736.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, wow.

[Saffro chuckles at the comment.]

INTERVIEWER: So, quite some time.

SAFFRO: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Was there a particular occupation- particular business that the family was engaged in?

[1:00]

SAFFRO: Well, originally my great-grandfather was a tailor. My- The rest of the family, they were in trading of cattle. My great-grandfather was a Torah writer, he was the scribe, and they were a very respected family in this town.

INTERVIEWER: How large a town was-

SAFFRO: It- only about- It's a village of only about a thousand people.

INTERVIEWER: And how many Jewish families were-

SAFFRO: Well, at the turn of the century, there were about a hundred Jewish people in the town. They were- was a large community, so to speak, for a small town, and the synagogue, which is still standing today, was built in 1836.

INTERVIEWER: And it survived?

SAFFRO: It survived due to the fact that houses on each side of the building were standing and they did not want to bomb it during World War II. They did march through the town.

[2:00]

SAFFRO: The Americans, I mean. [chuckles]

INTERVIEWER: What are, as you remember your- recall your childhood, growing up in the town-
SAFFRO: My childhood?
INTERVIEWER: What are some of the memories that come back to you?
SAFFRO: Well, my memories were extremely happy… [begins tearing up] Pardon me. We were a devoted family and I remember my grandfather who died when I was two years old, and my- we lived in a large house, and my grandparents lived above it. That house was built in 1888, and it was a family home, and- oh, the entrance was my grandparents' [???]. And the- My schoolmates treated me very nice. I have no complaints about that. When Hitler came into power, the- all the children had joined the Hitler Youth, and some of them were at times nasty and mentioned that we were "dirty Jews because Christ was killed by Jews", and I remember one in particularly[sic], and the rest however, whenever we went on bicycle trips to the next towns, they would always include me, and when there was signs around you- "Jews are not welcome here", they always said "Ruth, just don't open up your mouth, we will never say that you're a Jew", so that part was okay.
[4:04]
INTERVIEWER: I'd just like to go back a little bit more to your family-
SAFFRO: Okay.
INTERVIEWER: How many were-

[The video signal cuts momentarily. The end of the question and beginning of the response is lost.]
SAFFRO: [???]ly was my mother and father, my sister, and a brother, and I had a brother who was ten years younger than myself, and unfortunately, he was born in 1932 and had a mild case of Down's Syndrome, and that was one of the main reasons that my parents had a difficult time coming to the United States. My mother, when Hitler came into power, we were the first ones in town to get our papers from our family in California to come to [the] United States and regardless how much money was put up, we had gone to the American consulate and stood guard and unfortunately, they refused to let him come in, due to the fact that there are many people in America who are sick, and they didn't want any more people who are not normal, so to speak, to come to [the] United States, and they refused us to give us the papers to come, and they said to my parents that "your two older children are- you can send them whenever you want", and then my uncle, my mother's brother, with his wife and my two cousins, their children, we came together in 1937 on the Queen Mary through- we came out through Cherbourg, France.
[5:43]
INTERVIEWER: As you were growing up in the years before Hitler-
SAFFRO: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -as you mentioned you experienced veritable antisemitism in the town-
SAFFRO: No, not at that time, not at all, not at all.
INTERVIEWER: And you went to a public school?
SAFFRO: I went to a public school. I graduated in 1936 from the grammar school and then attended another school in Mannheim [???] advanced schooling, and I had to attend a Jewish school in Mannheim where my relatives lived.
INTERVIEWER: How observant was your family?
SAFFRO: Very much so, we were an Orthodox family, kept a kosher home, and my parents were very much involved in the synagogue, and I started Hebrew school from the time I was six years old, and our Hebrew school teacher came twice a week from the next town, Adelsheim, which is only two kilometers away, and taught us Hebrew lessons.
INTERVIEWER: How many Jewish children were there-
SAFFRO: At that time, maybe around fifteen, sixteen?
INTERVIEWER: And the other rest of town except [???]- this was not something that was made fun of or-
SAFFRO: No, no, no, no. Yeah, we- when the other children had their religious classes in the morning usually before our class started, about an hour earlier they had classes every day and then we would- or twice a week, I don't remember exactly, we would come to school an hour later.

INTERVIEWER: Do you recall the celebration of any particular holiday in your home?
SAFFRO: Well, I remember all of them very well. They were always very beautiful and meaningful and respectful and we loved it. [chuckles]
[7:44]
INTERVIEWER: So, you looked- you really you- as far as the Jewish calendar, this was something-
SAFFRO: Oh yeah, we just lived according to the way our parents were taught and followed their ideals.
INTERVIEWER: Do you recall, when was the- what was your first inkling, as far as the Nazis, and their antisemitism? When did you-
SAFFRO: Well, it's-
INTERVIEWER: -first begin to become aware of who they were, what they [???]?
SAFFRO: Well, I recall when Hindenburg was the Prime Minister and when Hitler came into power- I remember it very well. My parents were extremely depressed when the outcome came that he was going to be the next leader, and we knew that was not good for the Jews. We knew right then and there that trouble began.
INTERVIEWER: So that would have been January 1933?
SAFFRO: Just about at that time, yes.
INTERVIEWER: Did your parents though, at that time, think of leaving?

SAFFRO: Yes, because, as I mentioned before, we wanna- we were the first Jewish people in the town to receive our papers to get out… from our relatives in California. My mother's sister.
INTERVIEWER: So your parents were definitely apprehensive from the very beginning.
SAFFRO: I think so. Mm-hmm.
INTERVIEWER: And do you remember ever asking them or was there a round of discussion why did the Nazis hate the Jews so much? Where did this hatred come from?
SAFFRO: I don't recall as a child asking those kinda questions. Maybe I did. I don't remember. But it was difficult and we were in this town where everybody knew one another, and even if they, at the time had antisemitism, as far as I can remember, they did not show it that much.
INTERVIEWER: Even after the Nazis came into power-
SAFFRO: Yes.
INTERVIEWER: -there was-
SAFFRO: Well, there was a certain family that lived in the next block who was a very strong Nazi, and I recall that my mother was very friendly with this particular family and after that, they would not speak to us any longer. They definitely showed that the Jews are hated.
INTERVIEWER: Did your- the family ever had any thoughts about going to Palestine?

SAFFRO: Well, at one time my family did think that they would move there because they would be able to take my brother with, but I had an old auntie, my father's- my mother's aunt, my great aunt who lived in my grandparents' house upstairs after my grandparents had passed away and she was extremely close to us. She was like a grandmother, and we loved her very dearly, and she always said "No, go to America where the family is. Don't go to Palestine, you would be the only one there, and it would be better if you go where the family is"- my father had his brothers and sisters here and my mother had a very large family in California and she always felt it would be better to go to America than to Palestine.
INTERVIEWER: But because of your-
SAFFRO: My brother, right.
INTERVIEWER: -brother, you could not get permission for the whole family to go.
[11:40]
SAFFRO: Exactly, mm-hmm.
INTERVIEWER: As time went on, and the Nazis consolidated power…
SAFFRO: Mm-hmm.
INTERVIEWER: …in '34, '35, and so on, do you remember any changes at all in the town? Did anything change for you?
SAFFRO: Not really. I think the situation got much worse after we left in 1937. Much worse.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember discussions in the family about what to do in terms of emigrating- who should go where, who should stay behind, you know?
SAFFRO: No, not at that time, because we were all hoping that we could get together to the United States as a family, and my old aunt would come with us.
INTERVIEWER: And so finally, the decision was made for you-
SAFFRO: Well, it was actually made by my uncle, my mother's brother who at that time insisted that my sister and I get out with him and his family, and of course it was very difficult for my parents at that time to give up their children and…-
INTERVIEWER: Your father was working at that time- he was employed?
SAFFRO: My father was working. We owned land and he worked on the field.
INTERVIEWER: As a…-
SAFFRO: A landowner, and he had a butcher shop, a kosher butcher shop, and he worked on that.
INTERVIEWER: So, he- the time came when you had to leave.
SAFFRO: Right.
INTERVIEWER: Did your parents accompany you to the-
SAFFRO: No.
INTERVIEWER: -to the port?
SAFFRO: Pardon?
INTERVIEWER: To the port?

SAFFRO: No, they didn't. It was the last time I saw my mother.
INTERVIEWER: And you had hopes, though, that they would follow at that time.
SAFFRO: Absolutely. Absolutely, my mother said, "When I come, when we come, we'll bring everything with, and our belongings and so forth," so…
INTERVIEWER: Where did you embark from, where did you leave from?
SAFFRO: We first traveled to France, I- my mother's sister and my grandfather's sister lived
there in Paris, and we stayed with them for several days, and then we took the train to Cherbourg, France, and took the boat from there. As I said, it was a large boat. It was the Queen Mary and it really- and it only took four-and-a-half days to come here…
INTERVIEWER: So-
SAFFRO: …and I was very sick. [chuckles] [???] Go ahead. [14:43]
INTERVIEWER: The hardest [???] must have been that moment of departure, [??????????].
SAFFRO: Mm-hmm. Exactly.
INTERVIEWER: Then, once you got here…
SAFFRO: Yes.
INTERVIEWER: You came…- where did you first settle?
SAFFRO: I came to Chicago. My sister and I were separated, and she went to California.

INTERVIEWER: Why were- did you come here?
SAFFRO: Why, because my father's side of the family lived here, in Chicago, and my mother's side of the family were excepting three children, my two cousins and my sister in California, and they felt since I was the oldest, that I should stay here with my father's side of the family.
INTERVIEWER: What sort of reception did you have, what do you- [???] was it…
SAFFRO: Well, it was difficult, needless to say, I didn't know the language, and my family did see to it that I attended school here, and I was fortunate I went to a grammar school and graduated after one year, and that was Kozminski's school on the south side, and then I attended Lake View High School and took tests and after two years I got my diploma and I graduated eighteen with the rest of my friends. [chuckles]
INTERVIEWER: So that was quite an accomplishment-
SAFFRO: Well, thank you.
INTERVIEWER: -[???] not knowing the language.
SAFFRO: Yeah, well, when you're a teenager you have to pick it up since my cousins didn't speak much German. I had no choice! I had to learn it fast.
INTERVIEWER: During this time, you kept in touch with your parents?

SAFFRO: Absolutely. Absolutely, all the time, and received letters, and for three years, everything was okay, and my father came. You want to know about that?
INTERVIEWER: Yes, I just- I-
SAFFRO: Go ahead.
INTERVIEWER: I'm wondering though, as far as Kristallnacht4, did your parents ever- did they write to you about that?
SAFFRO: Oh yes, definitely.
INTERVIEWER: Did they- what did they tell you?
[16:52]
SAFFRO: Well, it was horrible, and all the Jewish people were really sorted outby the various Nazis that came from different towns into the village, and they pointed out where the Jews lived, and my mother was hidden in the neighbors' chicken coop, so she would not be- whatever they did, hit the people, and did horrible things to them, and at that time they also destroyed the Torahs in our synagogue, and smashed the glasses, you know, in- all over, and it was a terrible, terrible time, and a number of people really were taken to the hospitals and I remember my mother writing that the old uncle was beaten up very badly in the middle of the night, and she had to come and bandage him up and had to call the doctor. It was a Christian doctor who was not, from what we've heard, a Nazi, and he treated the Jewish people fairly well. He was a wonderful [???] Doctor [???], I remember him very well, and my father at that time was on his bicycle in the next town, and they

pulled him off the bicycle and pointed him out as a “dirty Jew”, and hit him and beat him up, and he landed in the hospital, and a doctor did treat him, and there was another story about my father which I’ll tell you later.
[18:45]
INTERVIEWER: And your brother was with your mother?
SAFFRO: Yes, right, and my aunt, and I don’t remember where they were hidden, but somehow, they survived.
INTERVIEWER: Did they, after Kristallnacht, did they increase their efforts to try to get out?
SAFFRO: Well, I don’t recall if they did- They were still hoping to the very end that somehow, they would be able to come out to the United States, yes.
INTERVIEWER: Did they write to you at all about the attitude of their neighbors towards them? Was there any change at all? Did things get worse?
SAFFRO: Well, that part I really don’t know to what degree, but my particular family- in fact I just received a letter from a man who’s doing the history in our town, and has been in correspondence with me for a long time, and he told us that our particular family was very well- liked by the gentile7 people, but that doesn’t mean that much- they still were persecuted.
[20:01]
INTERVIEWER: And so, your- the correspondence with your family continued through 1940?

SAFFRO: Yes, my father got out in 1940. My mother insisted that he get out, because she felt that once he's here, that he would be able to see to it that his wife and child and my old aunt would be able to follow.
INTERVIEWER: And so, he did-
SAFFRO: So, he did come out, yes, he came out, through Italy, just before the war started.
INTERVIEWER: So, he really- he got out in '39 then?
SAFFRO: Yeah- In '39, excuse me, right, yeah.
INTERVIERWER: And, did he come to Chicago-
SAFFRO: Yes, he came to Chicago, yeah, mm-hmm.
INTERVIEWER: Do you recall your meeting with-
SAFFRO: I remember it like it was yesterday. My uncle, who owned a large bakery on the north
side of Chicago called "Neumann's Bakery"8. He came with my father to Lake View High School and picked me up, and that's where we had our reunion in the car.
INTERVIEWER: What did he- do you recall what- as you talked, in the next few days, what did he tell you about your mother and brother and the things at your home?
SAFFRO: Well, he said that things were getting worse, and he was gonna try real hard to see if he could get them out. …Somehow. [chuckles]
INTERVIEWER: So what did you- what did he try to do?

SAFFRO: Well he tried to do- I- he- we were in correspondence with the secretary of the United States, and I was called to testify in my mother's behalf in Washington D.C., and I presented the case, and-
INTERVIEWER: This was at the state department?
SAFFRO: State department, yeah. And they would- they told me, they assured me that they would try to get my mother out. See, at that time, my mother was at [???].
INTERVIEWER: This was 194-
SAFFRO: 1940, they were deported in October, and we had to make- send all the papers to France to see if we could get her out, and she was- my brother in the mean time had passed away, he was in [the] camp, six weeks and my aunt was there two months and she passed away of dysentery and my brother died of starvation in the camp and it was something that was very difficult, and we saw to it that my mother had the papers to come to [the] United States, and she was supposed to leave on December 11th, 1941, and December 7th, war broke out, and there were no more ships that could leave. We did get her out of [the] camp, and she lived fairly comfortable[sic]- we were sending her money, my dad and I, and I was working already at that time to bring her to the United States. And she lived comfortable[sic], what am I saying, she lived comfortable[sic] in Marseilles, France, for several months after she was released from [the] camp.
[23:35]

INTERVIEWER: So your- your brother was nine years old when he died.
SAFFRO: Yes, mm-hmm.
INTERVIEWER: Did your mother write to you often?
SAFFRO: All the time.
INTERVIEWER: What did she write about the conditions of the camp?
SAFFRO: The- The conditions were unbelievable. They slept on straw, they had no blankets, it was very cold in the Pyrenees in the southern part of France. They had very little food. When my aunt passed away, she wore my mother's- she wore my aunt's dress because she only was able to take the clothes that she was wearing with her. They- Nazis- before they were deported, they threw the suitcase that they had packed, they came in the middle of the night and knocked on the door and said they had to leave in a few minutes. They could not take anything with. They had no coats, they had nothing. They were packed in cattle cars to go to France, and the conditions were unbelievable. It was terrible. There were so many people from the state of Baden where my family came from, and they met all their friends and relatives at that camp. It was un- it was terrible. It was really awful.
INTERVIEWER: And so, an elderly person like your aunt and your…

SAFFRO: And my mother's [???]- No, there was no way they could survive the winter, with what- as little as they had. They had no money, they had nothing.
INTERVIEWER: Do you recall the attitude of your family here? Were they- those who were American-born. Were they concerned, were they involved?
SAFFRO: Well, they were not involved, I kept telling them how serious the situation were. My father's family, they were [indifferent???] and my mother's side of the family- my father's side of the family were not as concerned and not as warm as I was used to to my mother's side of the family, that raised me, and my father's side were- They were all in the United States for a number of years, and they could not really visualize what was going on even though I kept telling them it was horrible and the situation is getting worse, but as far as my own personal con- thoughts are concerned, maybe they could've done more and brought more people over here, which my mother's side of the family did. My mother's brother however, I've- my- excuse me, my father's brother who owned the bakery helped my father to get out. He sent him the fare, I think.
[26:36]
INTERVIEWER: Your mother stayed- you mentioned, stayed in Marseilles for several months.
SAFFRO: She stayed there, I cannot tell you exactly because the war was going on, and we kept in contact with the American Red

Cross. She was with a friend, from what we heard, when the Nazis snapped her, and sent her on to Auschwitz.
INTERVIEWER: When was that?
SAFFRO: I don't know the exact date, but it was maybe 1942. 41-42, I haven't- I cannot recall the exact date.
INTERVIEWER: What was the last letter that you had from her?
SAFFRO: Well, she wrote that the situation is very, very severe, and that she was hoping that she would be able to get out, and that she pleaded with us to do everything we could to help get her out, but it was just [???]. It was just impossible after the war was [???] to no prevail.
INTERVIEWER: And even though you- you went to testify to the State Department, said you
need help…
SAFFRO: I went to testify, yes.
INTERVIEWER: …and…
SAFFRO: Right.
INTERVIEWER: …they really could not.
SAFFRO: They- there was no way that they could help. They- they were very- they- I was with many other people who had the same situation, you know, same problems, and I guess their hands were tied at that time due to the war. Not boats, are able to leave, you know they needed all the boats to supply the- the troops to go back and forth and and that was not- not exactly what they felt they could do at that time.

INTERVIEWER: Did you- since the war have you learned any more about the- the final days of your mother after she was sent away from Marseilles? Do you-
SAFFRO: No, I really don't know too much about that part. I don't know exactly what happened in Auschwitz, how she died or what happened. All I know is she was killed amongst so many of our village Jews.
[29:02]
INTERVIEWER: What was your- your father's reaction to all this, to this-
SAFFRO: My father was naturally very depressed at times, and he was disturbed that this had to happen, and- but his life was- my sister who came back to Chicago and finished her schooling, we had an apartment on the north side of Chicago, and we- he tried very hard to make our living as comfortable as he possibly could, by working very hard. He was an ambitious man, he worked in the stockyards, and as a butcher, and he adjusted very well to the American way of life, he really did, and he- he knew deep down in his heart how he felt about my mother, you know. Our mother.
INTERVIEWER: After the war, did you try to-
SAFFRO: Yes, we did, we again contacted the American Red Cross, and they did write us and told us that they knew that she was in France and they did not know exactly what had happened to her, but she disappeared, and further than that we did not hear- more than that, we did not hear.

INTERVIEWER: Had- did you give any thought to going over there- going to your- to- to search for her or-
SAFFRO: No, my husband- my late husband kept it a secret from me for a long time, not telling me she had perished at Auschwitz. He- he knew how I suffered and just about fifteen years ago,
he sat me down and he said to me… excuse me, "I want to tell you that… mother"-
[The interviewer hands Saffro a tissue]
SAFFRO: Thank you- "perished at Auschwitz". He says "I've followed up and this is where she passed away, was in Auschwitz".
INTERVIEWER: Did your father- your father probably also knew that…
SAFFRO: No, my father didn't know, my father passed away in 1954. He had a heart condition,
passed away.
INTERVIEWER: Have you been back to Germany since-
SAFFRO: I was back in Germany twice. I always said to my husband and my children that I could never go back. It would be too difficult for me, and one day my friends from my hometown came to visit me from Israel, and he said to me that he had gone back with his wife, and my cousin- the one that came- that I had mentioned previously, who came over with me who lives in San Francisco, her name is Bianca [???], she went back and one day I said to my husband, "you know, as long as Sigfried Neuberger, that's the one that lived in Israel, went back and my cousin Bi went

back, maybe it's time, maybe, we should go back to Germany. It was always his desire to see where I was born. It was a very important thing in his life. He always said, "I want to see where you were born and raised", so I- after I thought it over, I said "okay, maybe now we should go", and he made reservations the next day, he said, "I'm not gonna wait until you change your mind again. We're going," so we went, and we only stayed in our hometown overnight, we went to the cemetery, and I said my prayers at my grandparents' grave, my great grandparents', my aunt and uncles who were buried there since the 1700s, and I showed him the house where I was born in, and I showed him everything about the town, the synagogue, which was very important to me, and we left the next morning. My- I cried all night, and my husband said, "we're getting out of here", and before we left, it was very interesting, a former schoolmate of mine came running out of her house and she says, "Ruth, I heard you were here", and her name is Irene Ritter, and she said, "oh, I want to see you, I want to talk to you, I saved something for you from your- from the synagogue and I have it wrapped up in newspaper and I want to give it to you," she says, "I knew that someday we would be back here, and I just- if I had known I would've wrapped it up real nice." I said, "Irene, what did you have?" And she gave me a beautiful handmade tablecloth which was in our bima9 of the synagogue. She gave me a mezuzah which was in the house- in her house that she had taken over from a Jewish family, and it was a

real old mezuzah, and she gave me that, and also a prayer book, a small, German prayer book- not a Hebrew prayer book with Germans- with Jewish songs in it, and she gave me those three p- those three things as a remembrance, and we left, and we went on to Munich, and then we went on to Switzerland so forth and so on, but it was very, very difficult for me to stay in Germany itself, and-
INTERVIEWER: What year was that?
SAFFRO: Golly, it was in the 1970s, but-
INTERVIEWER: Was Irene the only one that you spoke to?
SAFFRO: No, I- I saw this man that I had mentioned before, who has made the history of the Jewish people in our town, I saw his sister, who was a very good friend of the family, and she went with us to the cemetery, and I knew that she was no Nazi. In fact, she was a communist, and during Hitler's time, she was interned, and she was a very gracious lady, so forth and so on, and I was supposed to see her brother, but my husband was in such a hurry because he lived in the next town, he said "I'm not staying here another minute, we're getting out of here".
INTERVIEWER: Because he saw-
SAFFRO: Because he saw how upset I was, exactly. But I did go back just two years ago with my daughter- I have two sons and a daughter, and the oldest one is the girl, and she always said from the time she was a little girl that "I would like to see where- where you were born Mama, I want to see where you played, I want to see everything about your hometown, so we went back, and it was

a little different this time. Even though I was very upset, I was greeted by this Irene who came to the train two towns away with her niece and picked us up, and she said, “I have a surprise for you”, she said, “all your schoolmates are- former schoolmates are in this guest house”, which is like a, what would you call it, a hotel, a small hotel in our town, “and they’re all waiting for you, and they want to greet you”. Of course, I was really shocked at that point, because I didn’t know how this would be, and it was amazing, we walked in, and there were about- about 35 people there, and they had the table set with all kinds of goodies and they greeted me and each one came up and kissed me and it was a very friendly kind of an atmosphere and my daughter who cannot speak German was astonished, you know, and she did find the innkeeper’s son, who spoke a little broken English, and she converted11 with him, while I was being entertained, so to speak, by all these former friends- so-called friends, and they wanted to know all about my life in America, which I told them, and I was not reluctant about telling them what they did to our family, how they… what had happened to my mother, how she perished, and my brother, and all the relatives and friends, and when I got through telling them all, one of my schoolmates came up to me and she said, and she hugged me and she kissed me and she says, “Ruth, I am so ashamed that I am a German, I am so ashamed.” And then this man who I had mentioned Mr. Wetterauer, he was also the clerk of our town, he said, “I just want you to know,” he

didn't speak to me, he spoke to the people that were there, he said "Ruth's father was in the German army and got his Iron Cross second class, and he was a very proud German, and he always wore it at various functions," and I said to them, "yeah, that's true, however I- it didn't mean anything to him when he was pulled off his bicycle in Adelsheim, they didn't care if he had the Iron Cross or not, they just pulled him off because he was a 'dirty Jew'," and they didn't have much to say after that, they really didn't, but I wanted them to know how I felt. I really let 'em have it, so to speak, I couldn't control myself.

[39:55]

INTERVIEWER: And you still said there is a certain bitterness that you still feel?

SAFFRO: At times, yeah. I really do. I will never forgive them or will never forget, and I've told my children the same thing, we can never forget, and, oh, so many different things happened to me while I was in this town, it's unbelievable.

INTERVIEWER: You mean this- at- during this trip?

SAFFRO: During this trip, yeah. Would you like to hear it?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

SAFFRO: Okay, there was a girl who used to come to our house when she was about thirteen, fourteen years old, who used to deliver the newspapers, and her father and my father were in the war together, so she was a Catholic girl and my father said "since the train takes several hours to go back to this town you can come

to our town- to our house and you stay until the train leaves again", so she came every day for years, and had Friday night dinner with us, and her- then, after she got older then a brother came and he stayed with us, and this girl wrote to me after the war, this lady, and told me that she had come to visit my mother and that my mother had told her how terrible it is that her girls are away and how much she misses us and she said they both cried together. Well, when I received this letter, I was very upset and I did not answer her, and when Icame back to my hometown the second time, I had mentioned it to this one schoolfriend, I said "there is a girl- there is a lady in this town, it's called Orsterberg12, and that I used to come to our house every day, and I would like to see her, if it's all possible", I said "I can't remember her- maidem her married name, but she lived in a- in this town and was right near the railroad station and had a large family", and I told them the last name and he said to me, "You know, Ruth, I was the postmaster of that town, and you give me her- all the information you have," I says, "Her maiden name was Paula [???], and that's all I can remember but I would love to see her", so he got on the telephone and he said, "there's one lady in the town who knows everybody, he says, "I'm gonna call her to see if she knows about this Paula", and he did talk to her and five minutes later the phone rang, and who was it, this Paula, and she said, "Oh my g-d," I said, "I've been thinking about you all these years, where are you?", and I told her and she says "I've got to see you", so before we had to take the

train stationed in that town, and this fellow took me to her house, and it was a wonderful reunion, we both started to cry, and she said, she wants to know all about my aunts who had always come to visit us, and I told her what had happened to my family and so forth and so on, and she gave me- she took a very pretty plate off her wall and she said, “I will- this is something I want you to keep for the rest of your life, this is a remembrance from me”, and she says “I will never forget the Friday night dinners that we had- that I spent in your home, and your father sang so beautiful,” my father was the hazzan13 at the synagogue, “and he always so beautifully, he was so…”, so it was a nice weekend we had, and I still hear from her now.

[43:54]

INTERVIEWER: And she told you about her meeting with your mother-

SAFFRO: No, not at that time, she had written that to me in the letter. But she remembered my entire family very well.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that you’ll ever go back in the future? Do you have-

SAFFRO: Well, I doubt it, but my- one of the main reasons I went to the town, not only to show my daughter where I came from, but also to make sure that a plaque is put up at the synagogue, and I was fortunate enough to meet the mayor of the town, who was a very respected, very young, good-looking man, quite intelligent, and he said to me, he said, “I- the plaque is made,”he said, “I’ve

been in- I've talked to this Mr. Wetterauer," because I had told him about it before I came, I was hoping the plaque would be up, and he said to me, "it will be put up on Crystal Night, at that time," and I told him that I was very appreciative because it meant a great deal to,me since my family had lived in this town for so many hundreds of years, and the synagogue was, a- was a [???] point in our family, and that I want this done, and unfortunately, when the walls came down, Kristallnacht, when- in Berlin, they had other things to do, the German people were not interested in putting up a plaque in this small town, they were celebrating, and it was not done, and I received a letter from the mayor again, telling me he was sorry that it has been delayed, and I just recently last week received a letter from my friend Irene, and she said to me, "Ruth, the plaque will be put up this Crystal Night".

[46:00]

SAFFRO: But this is another side of how Germany is today, we stayed- my daughter and I stayed in a very night [???] hotel in Heidelberg, and there was a sign across the street of this hotel, on a board, and it said, "Nazis are not welcome here", and, yeah, I was quite astonished, it was just as we were checking out I saw this sign and I went back in and I said to the innkeeper, "Do you have Nazis around here?", and she said, "oh yes, there's quite a few," she said," but we don't like them," but this reminds me of another incident that happened in our town when I talked to this Irene about the plaque. She said to me, "Ruth, when they put up the

plaque, I don't know if it will stay up". I said, "What do you mean?". She said, "there are so many Nazis around here again," she says, "they're gonna tear it down", she says, "I'm quite sure", so I was absolutely floored and taken back and astonished, but in our area, where I was born and this Bavarian area, the Nazis are very strong again. They really are. They are very strong. And while I was in this town, in this city of Heidelberg, when we arrived, there was a telephone number from a former girlfriend of mine, who I was very close with, and this Irene had contacted her, and she wanted to see me, and when I called her, she was so excited and so taken back, she says "I've got to see you," and her husband drove her about 25 kilometers15 to the hotel, we spent about six hours together, she brough a beautiful cake, and we cried and we laughed together and she said, "Ruth, you're my very best friend and I remember all the things we did together when we were kids," and so forth and so on. But I don't think that she was very sincere because I had written her several letters and I never received another one. She did call me several times while we were staying at the hotel and she said, "change your plans, come back, stay with us, my husband will come and pick you up and we want you to come and stay with us," but I have not heard from her since, so I don't know, maybe… I don't know. But it was a great reunion at the time.

INTERVIEWER: And the get together with all of the- those thirty-some-odd people, before you were all schoolmates-

SAFFRO: Yeah.
INTERVIEWER: What impressions did your daughter come away with from that?
[49:00]
SAFFRO: Well, she- she loved the town. She says it's beautiful, because it's surrounded by vineyards, and the beautiful trees and the town itself is in a valley, and all the old houses were rehab- most of them were rehabbed, and the people itself, she couldn't understand them, so she really could not get an impression of them, you know? That's hard to say.
INTERVIEWER: I'm wondering how these experiences have changed you? As far as your religious beliefs, have there been any changes along those lines?
SAFFRO: No, not that I can- no, not at all, I'm a chartered member of Niles Township Jewish Congregation in Skokie, the congregation was very important to my husband and myself and to our children, I'm still a very active member, I'm on the board for all these years, and my religious life is very important, I don't think it changed at all.
INTERVIEWER: What about your faith in human nature and your outlook on people?
SAFFRO: Well, my outlook has always been that I take people for what they are, I'm not one to judge them the minute I meet them, I feel everyone has something good in them, and I- as far as

I'm concerned, I do the best I can as long as I'm in this world! [chuckles]
INTERVIEWER: What lesson- what moral do you feel that the world should draw from what happened?
SAFFRO: Well, I don't know what- if the world has really learned a great deal from what, what took place in the years of 1939-46, before this horrible World War II, which my husband was in. I really don't know, it's difficult for me to say. We have accomplished a great deal. Our strive is always for peace. I really don't know. Hopefully this will never, never, ever happen again.
INTERVIEWER: Looking back on your experiences in Germany…
SAFFRO: Mm-hmm.
INTERVIEWER: …Your parenting, your relationship with that experience, is there anything that we haven't talked about, any story at all, anything at all that we haven't covered, anything you remember that-
SAFFRO: Oh, yes. Something very important. A year ago, the- a year ago, 11th of June, 1989, my entire family accept my son and my oldest grandchild, we went to Israel to celebrate our grandson's bar-mitzvah, and at that time, my husband already was very ill, but he was determined to go, and it was the greatest experience we ever had in our entire life. We took a number of trips before, across, but being with our family, it was the greatest, we loved everymoment of it, it was an experience that my family and I and

my husband, [???], will never ever forget, and it was wonderful. We went with a bar-mitzvah group, of 185 people, it was sponsored through our synagogue, and the bar-mitzvah itself at Masada was terrific it was beautiful, that's all I can say, it was just a marvelous, marvelous time for us.
INTEVIEWER: And it was a kind of an affirmation that we are here and-
SAFFRO: Absolutely, absolutely, and we met some of our friends that came from my hometown
who I knew from childhood, and we- they celebrated with us and it was really wonderful.
INTERVIEWER: Well, I'm happy that both of you got to share that experience-
SAFFRO: Absolutely, there were nine of us from our immediate family, and four- four friends of
my children, that went.
INTERVIEWER: Well, I really thank you, I know it is not easy to share these experiences but it
is important-
SAFFRO: Oh, I realize that, my husband always wanted- if I- I think I told you at the beginning
that he always wanted me to do this, so I'm- I feel very good about having done this, and I think
it's important that our future generation knows and especially everyone that's concerned with the

Holocaust knows what took place.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you.

SAFFRO: No, I thank you! [chuckles]

[The interview concludes with an extremely blurry card detailing the interview project, which is

mostly legible, though I can't make out the names.]

**Contributor's Notes by Ethan Kramer**

(1) While I'm not terribly knowledgeable on the topic, I am aware that Sennfeld has been incorporated into Adelsheim. On the German and English Wikipediæ, I have seen it usually formatted as Sennfeld (Adelsheim), as I believe it is considered a neighborhood. This is corroborated by a 2012 Adelsheim newsletter I translated from German recently. (2) I'm not sure what she specifically says here. It can probably be inferred what she means. (3) In this use, it's likely an old term for an elementary school. (4) For those unaware, *Kristallnacht*, or the Night of Broken Glass, or the November Pogrom, was a pogrom (a massive riot with the goal of ethnically cleansing settlements of Jewry) carried out by the SA and SS throughout Germany, Austria, and the Sudetenland, after Herschel Grynszpan, a 17-year-old German-born Polish Jew, assassinated the Nazi diplomat Ernst vom Rath on November 9, 1938. At least 91 fatalities are known. *Kristallnacht* was the event that turned the Holocaust from economic, political, and social exclusion to pure violence, and it set the tone for the rest of the Nazi Party's tenure. (5) We believe there's a small chance that they weren't destroyed, but it's unlikely. Also, it's slightly worth noting that the proper plural of Torah is Torot. (6) Unfortunately, I couldn't figure out what this name is. Sounds like "Grishall." Maybe "Grischel" or something similar? (7) Both "gentile" and "goy" mean the same thing: a non-Jewish person as described by a Jew. It's not a derogatory term in the slightest, and I presume that "goy" and "goyim" (the plural form) were first assumed to be so because they come from Yiddish, which of

course is a language known for making an art out of being snarky. "Goy" can be used in a derogatory tone, but that's entirely contextual. (8) While the bakery has since closed, you can still see that the building was once a bakery because it has the floor-to-ceiling windows a bakery would have. It has since been turned into a dry cleaner, but if you visit the corner of Broadway and Addison, you'll see the signs of the former Neumann's Bakery. (9) The raised platform in the front of a synagogue where the Torah is read on a podium. (10) A piece of parchment inscribed with specific Hebrew verses from the Torah (Deuteronomy 6:4–9 and 11:13–21) and attached in a case to the doorpost of a house, and, since the 1200s, on effectively all Jewish buildings. (11) Translation sense. Not religious. (12) She says "Orsterberg," but I'm pretty sure she means "Osterberg." (13) Cantor. I'll admit, I had to look this one up. (14) The Berlin Wall fell on November 9, 1989, exactly 51 years to the day after *Kristallnacht*. As such, with the Soviet Union collapsing and Germany beginning the long and technically never-completed process of reunification, there were more pressing matters than erecting a plaque. (15) That's about 15.5 miles.

# Caring for Holocaust Survivors as they Age

*Heather Klain, Nora Bergman, and Yonit Hoffman, Holocaust Community Services*

Holocaust Community Services is a social service agency that began providing social welfare services to Holocaust survivors starting in 1999, including financial and non-financial assistance. Over two decades, the program learned from survivors and developed a person-centered, trauma informed (PCTI) model of care. This model uses a holistic and individualized approach to service that takes into account the survivor's persecution history, triggers, and needs as they age. This essay will discuss the development of this model, its use with aging Holocaust survivors, and its future use with other older adult populations who have experienced trauma.

## Caring for Holocaust Survivors as they Age

As one of the largest human tragedies in history, the Holocaust has had inconceivable ramifications – to nations, families, and individuals. Trauma caused by the Holocaust – and accompanying resilience in survivors – has been studied since the

Holocaust ended. These studies have led to an ever-growing body of knowledge about how to care for the individuals and families who carry the memories of atrocities leveled during World War II in both their bodies and their minds.

**Background**

Many Holocaust survivors moved away from their places of birth after World War II ended, making new lives for themselves in Israel, America, and elsewhere around the globe. They got married, had families, and started businesses. Though haunted by the past and continuing to mourn lost family members, friends, homelands, belongings, traditions, and more, they prided themselves on their resilience and ability to persevere and ensure a good life for future generations through hard work. As survivors aged, they have faced the significant challenges and declines of aging, often layered and exacerbated by the long-term consequences of the trauma and losses of their past.

**The Challenges Associated with Aging**

Aging is associated with physical, cognitive, and emotional decline, leading a majority of older adults to require increasing

care and assistance to complete Activities of Daily Living (ADLs). For survivors, this decline and loss of independence can be especially upsetting and frustrating given that many were forced to fight for their lives to achieve it and have formed identities around the ability to sustain themselves and their families. Furthermore, as survivors approach end of life, cognitive decline and "life review" can bring memories of the Holocaust to the fore, forcing survivors to re-engage with terrifying and tragic experiences they'd previously suppressed or with which they'd previously been better able to cope.

**Person-Centered Trauma-Informed Care Background**

Person-centered, trauma informed (PCTI) care is defined as "an approach to engaging people with histories of trauma that recognizes the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledges the role that trauma has played in their lives." (National Center for Trauma Informed Care, 2021) It is a framework that "focuses on how trauma affects an individual's life and response to behavioral or health services from prevention through treatment" (Wisconsin Department of Health Services, 2014)

PCTI care is founded on the principles of the four Rs (citation):

1. *Realizes* the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery.
2. *Recognizes* the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system.
3. *Responds* by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and
4. Seeks to actively *resist re-traumatization*.

Also important is a "fifth R"- *resilience* – which emphasizes a strength-based approach of understanding how survivors coped with hardship and providing opportunities and interventions to bolster the ways they can best manage current challenges. PCTI care is the preferred framework from which to approach Holocaust survivor care. With survivors, PCTI care takes into account not only each individual's background and needs, but also the historical, cultural, and religious issues unique to Jewish people growing up in Europe and the former Soviet Union, both before the Second World War and after.

**Integrating PCTI care**

Under PCTI care, both the setting of care and the way that care is provided are modified to ensure the comfort and safety of survivors. Institutional care settings – such as hospitals, nursing homes, and rehabilitation centers – typically pose salient threats of re-traumatization and are therefore a useful case study in how such modifications can be made. Without attention to providing PCTI care, such facilities contain many potential trauma triggers – reminders of past experiences that lead to harmful physical, psychological, and emotional reactions. For example, institutional care settings are traditionally cold and clinical; they are filled with individuals in uniforms, loud voices, and different accents; they regularly restrict movement and choice; sometimes they require individuals to line up for food; important information commonly goes unshared with patients or residents. Each of these examples may remind a survivor of their past interactions with Nazis and Nazi collaborators, including being in confined spaces and ordered to move around involuntarily; undergoing medical experimentation; and lacking access to vital resources.

It is critical for staff to *realize* when an individual being cared for in a facility has a trauma history (e.g., by asking relevant questions during intake), to *recognize* signs and symptoms of traumatic responses (e.g., fear, aggression, dissociation), and to *respond* by making efforts to decrease triggers in the care setting (e.g., grant as much choice as possible, speak softly). All of these efforts contribute to *resisting re-traumatization and* fall within a framework of PCTI care.

Though institutionalized care settings are rife with potential trauma triggers, re-traumatization can occur outside of such facilities as well. As with all traumas, different experiences trigger different individuals differently. PCTI care must incorporate this knowledge at every turn, by viewing each survivor as an individual. Someone who was in hiding in a forest during the Holocaust may be triggered by nightfall, while wasting food may upset a survivor who faced hunger and starvation (Baycrest Manual, 2003).

**PCTI Care for Holocaust Survivors at a Social Service Agency**

Use of PCTI principles at a social services agency, such as Holocaust Community Services at CJE SeniorLife in Chicago, requires commitment and adaptation at all levels of the agency, and is an ongoing process. The impact of services is considered in terms of *people* (staff and clients), *places*, and *policies*. Every detail is examined and adapted to create an environment where both clients and staff feel safe, comfortable, and empowered by knowledge, voice, and choice.

PCTI care manifests in several ways at Holocaust Community Services. At the personnel level, all staff – from front desk receptionist to Director – learn about trauma and how individuals with trauma histories may have different needs or exhibit different behaviors from other older adults served by the agency. Staff are trained to present calmly, speak clearly, and provide options to survivors and other clients. The office space is clean, well-lit, and has multiple exits to ensure that survivors are not reminded of previous experiences in dark, dirty, cramped, or inescapable settings. While some potentially triggering *processes* are unavoidable, such as the collection of personal information,

interviews and assessments are conducted as sensitively as possible. Staff members clearly explain why different questions are being asked and how the information will be used, and they assure clients that the information will not be shared with others. Information about services is offered in clients' native language to promote understanding, autonomy, and choice. At events, staff and volunteers are instructed to be sensitive to survivor triggers, such as not requiring them to stand in lines to register, and not removing or discarding food from the table while they are present.

**Service Provision during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic carried great potential to be especially re-traumatizing for Holocaust survivors, as they were once again separated from friends and family, uncertain about adequate supplies of food and other essential resources, living in fear of losing loved ones, and generally uncertain and anxious about what was to come. Furthermore, throughout 2020, news channels were airing stories not only about the pandemic, but also about economic issues and increasing racial tensions, adding to survivors' worries. In Chicago, for example, protests and

associated destruction of property – including broken glass on many downtown storefronts – evoked memories of *Kristallnacht*. For many, these worries manifested in stress, sleep issues, nightmares, and other symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Holocaust Community Services responded at the beginning of the pandemic by calling every survivor connected to the program to ensure that they had food and medication, that they were safe in their homes, and to provide reassurance that the agency would still provide support. After these basic needs were met, the agency increased financial support and expanded remote services to decrease social isolation. Support groups were transferred online so that survivors did not lose their sense of community and had a place to discuss their anxieties and share ways to remain resilient. Care packages were sent with clear information about the pandemic, PPE for protection, and, around holidays, with treats and wishes to let survivors know they were part of a caring community. These seemingly simple adaptations were made thoughtfully, with consideration of survivors' unique

needs, and they made a huge difference to survivors who expressed overwhelming gratitude for each outreach effort.

**Applicability of Model to Other Older Adult Populations with Histories of Trauma**

Within the next 20-30 years, the last living Holocaust survivor will have passed away. The Jewish social services community recognizes this fast-approaching reality, as exemplified by the Jewish Federations of North America's (JFNA) recent expansion from the "Center for Advancing Holocaust Survivor Care" to the "JFNA Center on Aging and Trauma and Holocaust Survivor Initiative." Practices developed by agencies serving Holocaust survivors are now being adapted to work with other populations with histories of trauma. These groups include minorities in America, older adults with disabilities, survivors of genocides, domestic violence survivors, and more. JFNA has compiled resources with various topics – trainings for caregivers, creative arts intervention, and PCTI care during a pandemic are only a few examples.

Just as American medicine has moved away from the "one size fits all" care model, PCTI initiatives developed for survivors will continue to grow and develop over time as they are put into use with other populations. While flexibility is a key part of the model, the PCTI model for working with Holocaust survivors has set the groundwork from which lessons will be learned and better care models developed to meet the unique needs of many different populations and future generations who may face trauma.

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The things I saw beggar description ... The visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty, and bestiality were so overpowering as to leave me a bit sick. In one room, where there were piled up twenty or thirty naked men, killed by starvation, George Patton would not even enter. He said he would get sick if he did so. I made the visit deliberately, in order to be in a position to give first-hand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to propaganda.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, later President of the United States, on 12 April 1945, after visiting Ohrdruf Concentration Camp, a subcamp of Buchenwald

## Unit Thirteen: Holocaust Denial and Distortion

Studying this topic stood out to me because it shows that denial was not only about changing the story of what happened afterward. It was also about trying to remove the proof of what happened in the first place. – David Bulkowski, Oakton College student

Here we have two essays on denial and distortion, then an essay on American businesses, Nazi Germany and the Holocaust.

### What is Holocaust denial?

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

Holocaust denial and distortion began during the Holocaust and remains with us today. What is Holocaust denial? Denial is "Holocaust denial is a movement that exists to deny the existence of the Holocaust. Deniers vary in theory, but all employ antisemitic rhetoric in the formulation of their arguments" (Adelé-Marie, 2009). Why does denial still exist? Antisemitism did not end with the Holocaust because the hatred of the Jews did not end. Hatred of the Jews was global, and it has not ended. Denial takes on many forms, from falsification of data, to faux scholars who use their body of work to justify their stance on denial. Denial questions facts. Deniers will say Hitler never directly ordered this, or he never signed that. Distortion involves minimizing the known

historical record related to the Holocaust (as well as with other genocides). Also, conferences whose purpose, organizers will say is not to deny the Holocaust, but to "debate" it in a "scientific" context. What belief systems are behind this? The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum stated this about denial and distortion:

> Holocaust denial is any attempt to negate the established facts of the Nazi genocide of European Jews. Holocaust denial and distortion are forms of antisemitism, prejudice against or hatred of Jews. Holocaust denial and distortion generally claim that the Holocaust was invented or exaggerated by Jews as part of a plot to advance Jewish interests. These views perpetuate long-standing antisemitic stereotypes, hateful beliefs that helped lay the groundwork for the Holocaust. Holocaust denial, distortion, and misuse all undermine the truth and our understanding of history. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2019, para. 1-2)

Importantly, for more on denial and distortion, see also the essay in chapter two of this book "Will antisemitism ever end" by Sherry Bard. Last, "deniers refer to the Holocaust as a hoax, arguing that Jews have used the Holocaust as a construction to create a multi-million-dollar industry revolving around scholarship and commemoration" (Adelé-Marie, 2009).

Connective with this analysis, readers interested in local history, memory, and the legacy of the Holocaust are encouraged to seek out *The Past in Conversation: Oberbrechen: A German Village Confronts its Nazi Past, A Graphic History*. This thoughtful and engaging work examines how one German community has confronted its Nazi past and the lasting impact of the Holocaust on survivors, families, and subsequent generations. Although I was granted permission by the editors and authors to share several images from the book with my students, I do not have permission to reproduce them in this textbook. Nevertheless, the three images discussed below provide a glimpse into the powerful stories and historical insights contained within the volume.

There is no single correct interpretation. Each image is based on actual historical accounts, documents, and testimonies. The first image draws upon census records and depicts the demographic composition of the village. It shows that only five Jewish families lived there, while the overwhelming majority of residents were Catholic. It also illustrates that the Nazi Party was

not especially popular in the community, receiving only 13.5 percent of the vote in the November 1932 election. The image raises important questions about how ordinary communities responded to the rise of Nazism and what responsibility, if any, local residents bore for the persecution of their Jewish neighbours.

The second image focuses on the postwar experiences of a Holocaust survivor struggling to explain the lasting psychological effects of her persecution. The doctor shown in the image dismisses or fails to understand what we would today recognize as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). After emigrating to Los Angeles, the survivor reflected on not having seen her brother for thirty years. Her story echoes that of Holocaust survivor Magda Brown, who lost dozens of family members during the Holocaust. Out of approximately seventy relatives, only Magda, her brother, and seven cousins survived. Like many survivors, she spent years uncertain about the fate of loved ones and did not learn that her brother Milos had survived until the early 1960s.

The final image depicts a survivor returning to his hometown after the war and visiting the house in which he once

lived before it was confiscated by the Nazi regime and transferred to others. The reactions of local residents reveal another painful aspect of the postwar experience: many survivors who attempted to recover stolen property encountered suspicion, hostility, or indifference. Reclaiming homes, businesses, and possessions was often extraordinarily difficult, as survivors were required to provide proof of ownership despite the destruction and upheaval caused by the war.

Taken together, these images challenge simplistic understandings of the Holocaust and its aftermath. They demonstrate that the consequences of Nazi persecution did not end with liberation in 1945. They also provide powerful evidence against Holocaust denial and distortion by documenting the experiences of real individuals, the loss of property and community, the long-term psychological effects of persecution, and the continuing struggles survivors faced after the war. Through personal stories grounded in historical records, the images remind us that the Holocaust was not an abstract event but a lived reality that continued to shape survivors' lives for decades.

For this reason, preserving historical memory matters. Understanding how ordinary people became participants, bystanders, victims, or resisters helps counter Holocaust denial and distortion while providing important lessons about the dangers of intolerance and dehumanization.

Education challenges hate. Drawing on her experience as a former intelligence leader with the United States Capitol Police and a longtime federal security professional, Julie Farnam emphasized that hate-based extremist movements often develop through processes of radicalization, desensitization, and the normalization of prejudice.

Farnam described how individuals can become increasingly receptive to exclusionary ideologies, conspiracy theories, and violence, while stressing the important role that observers, educators, families, and communities play in recognizing warning signs and interrupting pathways to extremism. Farnam further argued that hate threatens democratic institutions and civil society, underscoring the need for critical media literacy, historical

awareness, and proactive efforts to counter discrimination, bias, and extremist recruitment (Farnam, 2024).

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## Denial and Distortion

*Yousuf Ali Khan*

Distortion and denial have historically played a significant role in shaping the aftermath of genocides and have had a particularly harmful impact following the Holocaust perpetrated by Nazi Germany. Unfortunately, these efforts continue into the present day, influencing public understanding of one of history's most thoroughly documented genocides. Holocaust denial is the attempt to minimize, distort, or completely deny the atrocities committed against the Jewish population during the Nazi-perpetrated genocide. These views are often fueled by antisemitism, prejudice, and hatred toward Jewish people, while also promoting long-standing stereotypes and misinformation. Such claims persist despite the Holocaust being the most extensively documented genocide in history. Historical records, survivor testimonies, photographs, official Nazi documents, and decades of scholarly research overwhelmingly demonstrate the scale and reality of the Holocaust (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum 2019).

Individuals who deny or downplay the Holocaust often rely on misleading or inaccurate claims. One common assertion is that significantly fewer than six million Jews were murdered during the Holocaust, with some Holocaust deniers claiming that only approximately 271,000 Jews died. This figure is derived from records housed in the Arolsen Archives, a collection containing millions of documents related to Nazi persecution. However, the archives themselves explicitly state that these records do not represent a complete accounting of Holocaust victims. The documents include only certain camps and registered prisoners while excluding countless Jews murdered in mass shootings, extermination camps, ghettos, forced marches, and other locations. Many victims were never issued death certificates or formally documented.

Another common claim is that Auschwitz functioned primarily as a labor camp rather than a center of systematic mass murder. Holocaust deniers sometimes point to the existence of an orchestra or a swimming pool as evidence that prisoners experienced humane living conditions. In reality, the prisoner

orchestra was forced to perform during roll calls and while prisoners marched to forced labor or, in many cases, to the gas chambers. The swimming pools were generally intended for the recreation of Nazi personnel rather than prisoners. These features also served as propaganda tools, allowing the Nazi regime to create the false impression that Jewish prisoners were being treated fairly and humanely (Staff 2025).

Overall, the Holocaust continues to face distortion and denial, much of which has been amplified through social media and contemporary political movements. Combating misinformation requires preserving historical evidence, survivor testimonies, official documentation, and ongoing scholarly research. Maintaining an accurate historical record is essential not only to honor the victims of the Holocaust but also to educate future generations about the consequences of hatred, prejudice, and genocide.

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## America and the Holocaust

Many people are unaware of the German American Bund, a pro-Nazi organization in the United States whose origins can be traced to the Friends of New Germany, a group established in 1933 with the support of Rudolf Hess, Adolf Hitler's Deputy Führer. The organization absorbed other pro-Nazi groups active during the 1920s and 1930s, including the Free Society of Teutonia and GAU-USA, and eventually became known as the German American Bund. On 20 February 1939, the Bund held its largest and most infamous rally at Madison Square Garden in New York City. Following the entry of the United States into the Second World War on 8 December 1941, the organization rapidly collapsed and was ultimately disbanded. (German American Bund 2026)

Many are also unaware that some American businesses maintained economic relationships with Nazi Germany before and during the early years of the Third Reich. It is therefore important to examine not only events in Europe but also the ways in which Nazism intersected with American society. We begin with the

work of Daniel Patrick Brown, whose scholarship is widely known for examining female perpetrators of the Holocaust as well as other aspects of Nazi history. In the following essay, Brown explores connections between America and the Holocaust, concluding with an examination of Holocaust denial.

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**America and the Holocaust**

*Daniel Patrick Brown*

"The past is never dead. It's not even past." William Faulkner,

*Requiem for a Nun*

To some, it may seem incongruous to examine the United States of America and the Holocaust together. In the first place, the horrific attempt to annihilate those the Nazis targeted as so-called undesirables occurred in Europe and the western Asiatic regions of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). America lies over 3,550 miles from the west coast of France, which was the most western area of Nazi occupied Europe. Consequently, the

United States was safely cushioned by the Atlantic Ocean from the atrocities and mass murder that the Third Reich committed. While today people live in a truly global community, during the era of the Third Reich, there were no transatlantic aircraft flights, maritime travel took weeks, and instantaneous communication could only be accomplished via telegraph or telephone services.

Secondly, America and Nazi Germany were ostensibly diametrical opposites. The United States, a nation that aspired to fulfil the noble principles of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," stood in stark contrast to everything that the authoritarian Nazi police state represented. America was the world's great experiment in representative self-government. The Third Reich was unabashedly dedicated to elevating its so-called Aryan citizens while simultaneously denigrating those it considered to be inferior and/or burdens on the body politic. The Third Reich would ultimately plunge the world into war and the German people into ruin.

Finally, from a business perspective, America was a country that championed free market capitalist business practices, whereas the Third Reich embraced a mercantile economic model that only allowed businesses to operate that benefited the state first and afforded the accumulation of wealth-if sanctioned-a distant second. Although there were no profit limitations placed on American commercial interests during the 1930s and early 1940s, in 1936 one of the Nazi mandates on those doing business in the Third Reich limited the maximum profit margin any commercial enterprise could earn at a maximum of nine percent.

So, how are America and the Holocaust linked together? America, despite its lofty ideals and representative form of government, was in some ways a more racist and bigoted country than the Third Reich. Long before the Nazis imposed their "euthanasia" or so-called “mercy killing” of those deemed “unfit" or "handicapped" in Germany, they took elements of the American eugenics movement to construct their *raison d'être* for murdering Germans who were physically and mentally disabled.

The term “eugenics” was coined in 1883 by Sir Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin, who advocated a new science of human improvement through better breeding. This new approach, which sometimes was referred to as “positive eugenics,” caught on in the United States in the first third of the twentieth century. However, a more sinister side, “negative eugenics,” soon was touted as a requisite piece of the purification process it would be of no use to create a better stock if the “immoral minorities,” “useless eaters,” and “mental defectives” were allowed to continue to multiply and perhaps overwhelm the healthy group. Respected American historians, such as Lothrop Stoddard and American legal scholars, like Madison Grant, advocated forced sterilizations of the “beings with ballast existences” as well as the exclusion of certain immigrants from entry into the United States.

Historian Stefan Kühl’s 1994 study, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism, and German National Socialism,* created a sensation in the United States when he documented the open and ongoing dialogue between American and Nazi eugenicists that continued *until the late 1930s*. This is not to say that the

American eugenics movement ever advocated murdering those determined to be “unworthy of life.” Nevertheless, Nazi social engineers, who were echoing similar pronouncements Hitler had made in *Mein Kampf*, were able to directly apply these American tenets of eugenics and gradually link them to their concerns about the health of the “community of ethnic Germans” (*Volksgemeinschaft).* Just as some American states had passed legislation to sterilize epileptics, and/or "confirmed criminals, idiots, imbeciles and rapists," Nazi statutes also gave public health officials the right to sterilize all citizens who were objectified as “life unworthy of life,” “beings of lesser worth,” and/or “beings with ballast existences.” Furthermore, to justify this law, Nazi legislators cited Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes’s opinion in *Buck v. Bell* (1927) that allowed for state-mandated sterilization, writing “it would be strange if it could not call upon those who already sap the strength of the state for these lesser sacrifices . . . in order to prevent our being swamped with incompetence . . . Three generations of imbeciles is [sic] enough” (Brown, 2019, p. 149).

Hitler and his acolytes also viewed the manner in which Jim Crow legislation stripped African Americans from all meaningful socio-political rights to serve as the model for the infamous Nuremberg Laws, which did essentially the same thing to German Jews. Also, the seventeen legal scholars and Nazi bureaucrats who assembled in Berlin during the summer of 1934 were particularly impressed with the way in which Southern African Americans had been relegated to perpetual economic servitude via sharecropping and tenet-farming. In her study of institutionalized hierarchies, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent*, Isabel Wilkerson has shown that India's vanquished caste system, the Third Reich's racial state, and America's Jim Crow legislation, all share the same unsettling methodologies.

American Jews were also subjected to unrelenting discrimination and denigration as well. Antisemites were found in all three branches of the U.S. government. On the legislative side, many representatives and senators held anti-Jewish beliefs, most notably Representative John Rankin (D-MS). Rankin's disdain for all varieties of non-Anglo-Saxons is found throughout the

*Congressional Record* during his sixteen consecutive terms (March 4, 1921–January 3, 1953). In 1941 (but prior to America's entry into the Second World War) Rankin railed against "Wall Street and a little group of our international Jewish brethren" (Brown, 2019, p. 37). He claimed Jews were attempting to get America into the conflict. Four months after the United States joined the war effort, Rankin derided a Supreme Court decision that he disagreed with, declaring that he was tired and the American people were tired, "of this [Felix] Frankfurter bureaucracy" (Brown, 2019, p. 37).

The ranking senator from Mississippi, Theodore Bilbo (D-MS) was a New Deal supporter who was also a white supremacist, and he was fixated on the idea that racial decay occurred through race mixing. In fact, Bilbo contended that "one drop of blood placed in the veins of the purest Caucasian destroys the inventive genius of his mind and palsies the creative faculty" (Whitman, 2017, p. 77). It may be difficult for Americans to believe, but Bilbo's declaration went further than what the Nazis espoused, as they flatly rejected Bilbo's "one-drop" contention as too extreme.

As for the judicial branch, Supreme Court justice James McReynolds never hid his contempt for Jews. He refused to speak to his fellow justices who were Jewish (Benjamin N. Cardozo and Louis B. Brandeis). Sensing the mood of the country, many Jewish leaders urged FDR not to appoint Felix Frankfurter to the Supreme Court when Cardozo died in July 1938. They feared a backlash. Indeed, *Time Magazine* had characterized Frankfurter as a Jewish radical New Dealer and that to replace Cardozo (a moderate Jew) with a Jewish activist would provide the antisemites with more ammunition-not only to be used against American Jews, but potentially against Jews abroad as well.

When synagogues were torched and Jews openly attacked in Germany on *Reichskristallnacht* [Night of the Broken Glass, November 9-10, 1938], two members of Congress, Senator Robert Wagner (D-NY) and Representative Edith Rogers (R-MA), sympathetic to the plight of the defenseless German-Jewish community, were so moved that they introduced legislation to at least assist the young victims of Nazi racism. The measure, the bipartisan Wagner-Rogers Bill, would have allowed the United

States to admit 20,000 Jewish children above and beyond the established immigration quota. An immediate backlash occurred. FDR's cousin and wife of the U.S. Commissioner of Immigration, Laura Delano Houghteling, stated that "20,000 charming children would all too soon grow into 20,000 ugly adults" (Brown, 2019, p. 37).

Father Charles E. Coughlin, the "Radio Priest," had a huge following as he railed against Jewish bankers, whom he blamed for the worldwide Depression. After Hitler assumed power in Germany, William D. Pelley founded his antisemitic and para-militaristic "Silver Legion" (his followers were known as "Silver Shirts" and/or "Christian Patriots"). The Silver Legion attracted a large number of new recruits and there were chapters in virtually every state in the Union. The Reverend Gerald L. K. Smith was another prominent antisemitic agitator who amassed a legion of likeminded followers. After the assassination of "the Kingfish," Huey P. Long, in September 1935, Smith was left in charge of the "Share the Wealth" movement that the two had started. The two had initiated this program as a means to remedy the economic inequity that they

perceived to have caused the Great Depression. Smith then shifted the organization into a vehicle for his white supremacist agenda.

The U.S. State Department, an arm of the executive branch, did all it could to stop Jewish immigration to America. During a time of when Jews were desperately seeking foreign sanctuary, the State Department created complex and detailed application forms and petitioners were required to submit six copies in order to generate a valid file. To even be considered for entry, an applicant had to have an American sponsor. Also, applications were rejected with no explanation as to why their request was denied. Furthermore, an unsuccessful application required a six-month waiting period prior to any reapplication. In March 1943, the Assistant Secretary of State, Breckinridge Long, proclaimed that saving European Jews was not prudent because it "would take the burden and the curse off Hitler" (Brown, 2019, p. 37). Historian Frank Bajohr's 2003 work entitled, *Unser Hotel ist Juden-frei: Bäder- Antisemitismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* [*Our Hotel Forbids Jews: Temporary-Housing Antisemitism in the 19th and 20th Centuries*] documented the harsh reality for Jewish travelers: until the 1950s, hotel and resort

antisemitism in the United States was so pronounced that approximately 30% of all American vacation accommodations did not allow Jewish guests to stay at their properties. Bajohr pointed out that this was a higher exclusion rate for American Jews than for Jews residing in the Third Reich *at the same time*.

Thankfully, the Third Reich was utterly defeated in May 1945 and its monstrous assault on humanity was exposed for the world to see. Yet, only seventy-five years later, a blink of an eye in the history of humankind, white supremacists, many espousing the same sort of virulent antisemitism as the Nazis, have even been championed by Americans leaders and lawmakers. Therefore, it would be beneficial to remember that after visiting the newly liberated KL-Buchenwald subcamp at Gotha, American General Dwight David Eisenhower, the commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in Europe, ordered the following: "Get it all on record now-get the films-get the witnesses-because somewhere down the road of history some bastard will get up and say that this never happened" (Letter, General Eisenhower to General Marshall Concerning His Visit to a Germany Internment Camp near Gotha

(Ohrdruf), April 15, 1945 [*Dwight D. Eisenhower's Pre-Presidential Papers*, Principal File, Box 80, Marshall George C. (6); NAID #12005711]). The deniers are still with us and some prominent Americans either have forgotten what National Socialism all was about or, worse, its tenets.

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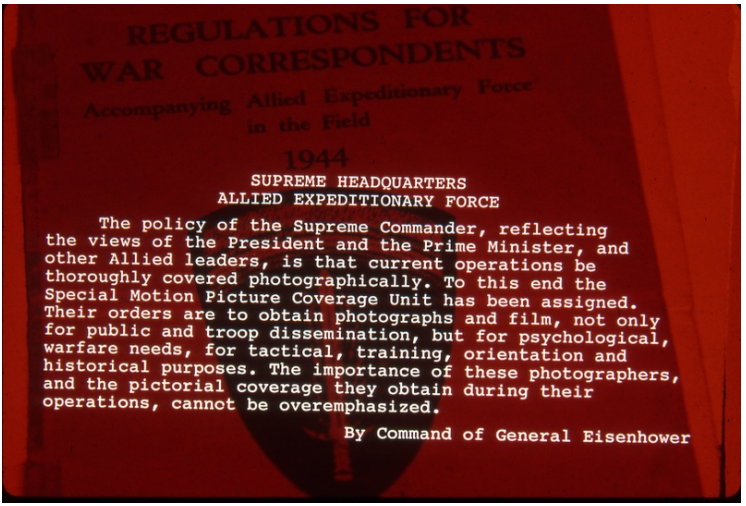
## Addendum

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

The letter that Professor Brown refers to from General Eisenhower to General Marshall is reproduced here. Note that at liberation, Eisenhower wanted to witness the camps so that he could later defend what he saw. Philip Drell also noted Eisenhower's intent against deniers and his requirement that all was documented, in writing and film, precisely what the U.S. Army saw so that no one could ever deny what the liberators witnessed.


REGULATIONS FOR
WAR CORRESPONDENTS
Accompanying Allied Expeditionary Force
in the Field
1944
SUPREME HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE
The policy of the Supreme Commander, reflecting the views of the President and the Prime Minister, and other Allied leaders, is that current operations be thoroughly covered photographically. To this end the Special Motion Picture Coverage Unit has been assigned. Their orders are to obtain photographs and film, not only for public and troop dissemination, but for psychological, warfare needs, for tactical, training, orientation and historical purposes. The importance of these photographers, and the pictorial coverage they obtain during their operations, cannot be overemphasized.
By Command of General Eisenhower

Philip Drell's image of his War Correspondents book, overlaid with instructions for the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF). *Courtesy and permission for use in this OER only, the Drell family*

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DDE/nmr

15 April 1945

The Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

✓ BCOS
Patton

Dear General:

Today I forwarded to the Combined Chiefs of Staff the essentials of my future plans. In a word, what I am going to do now that the western enemy is split into two parts, is to take up a defensive line in the center (along a geographical feature that will tend to separate our forces physically from the advancing Russians) and clean up the important jobs on our flanks. A mere glance at the map shows that one of these is to get Lubeck and then clear up all the areas west and north of there. The other job is the so-called "redoubt". I deem both of these to be vastly more important than the capture of Berlin + anyway, to plan for making an immediate effort against Berlin would be foolish in view of the relative situation of the Russians and ourselves at this moment. We'd get all coiled up for something that in all probability would never come off. While true that we have seized a small bridgehead over the Elbe, it must be remembered that only our spearheads are up to that river; our center of gravity is well back of there.

Montgomery anticipates that he will need no help from the Americans other than that involved in an extension of Simpson's left. However, I rather think that he will want possibly an American Airborne Division and maybe an Armored Division. I will have enough in reserve to give him this much help if he needs it. But assuming that he needs no American help, that job will be performed by the 17 divisions of the 21st Army Group.

In the center, extending all the way from Newhouse on the Elbe down to the vicinity of Selb on the border of Czechoslovakia, will be the Ninth and First Armies, probably with about 23 to 24 divisions, including their own reserves. This will be enough to push on to Berlin if resistance is light, and the Russians do not advance in that sector. Bradley's main offensive effort will be the thrust along the line Wursberg-Nuremberg-Linz, carried out by the Third Army with about 12 divisions. Devers, with another 12 U.S. divisions and 6 French divisions, will capture Munich and all of the German territory lying within his zone of advance.

About 8 divisions at that time will be on strictly occupational duties, largely under Fifteenth Army. This will leave about 5 divisions, including Airborne, in my Reserve.

The intervention of the British Chiefs of Staff in my military dealings with the Soviet has thrown quite a monkey-wrench into our speed of communication. If you will note from Antonov's reply to the telegram that



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we finally sent (as revised on recommendation of the BCOS) the point he immediately raised is whether our message implies an attempt, under the guise of military operations, to change the occupational boundaries already agreed upon by our three governments. Frankly, if I should have forces in the Russian occupational zone and be faced with an order or "request" to retire so that they may advance to the points they choose, I see no recourse except to comply. To do otherwise would probably provoke an incident, with the logic of the situation all on the the side of the Soviets. I cannot see exactly what the British have in mind for me to do, under such circumstances. It is a bridge that I will have to cross when I come to it but I must say that I feel a bit lost in trying to give sensible instructions to my various commanders in the field.

On a recent tour of the forward areas in First and Third Armies, I stopped momentarily at the salt mines to take a look at the German treasure. There is a lot of it. But the most interesting - although horrible - sight that I encountered during the trip was a visit to a German internment camp near Gotha. The things I saw beggar description. While I was touring the camp I encountered three men who had been inmates and by one ruse or another had made their escape. I interviewed them through an interpreter. The visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty and bestiality were so overpowering as to leave me a bit sick. In one room, where they were piled up twenty or thirty naked men, killed by starvation, George Patton would not even enter. He said he would get sick if he did so. I made the visit deliberately, in order to be in position to give first-hand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to "propaganda".

The Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

If you could see your way clear to do it, I think you should make a visit here at the earliest possible moment, while we are still conducting a general offensive. You would be proud of the Army you have produced. In the first place, the U.S. ground and air forces are a unit; they both participate in the same battle all the way down the line from me to the lowest private. I can find no evidence whatsoever of any mutual jealousy, suspicion or lack of understanding. In fact, I know of one or two Major Generals in the Air Force that one of my Army Commanders would accept as Division Commanders today.

Next, you would be struck by the "veteran" quality of the whole organization. Commanders, staffs, and troops, both air and ground, go about their business in a perfectly calm and sure manner that gets results. I am quite certain that no organization has ever existed that can re-shuffle and re-group on a large scale and continue offensives without a single pause, better than can Bradley and his staff.

Another thing that would strike you is the high average of ability in our higher command team. In recent telegrams to you I explained something of



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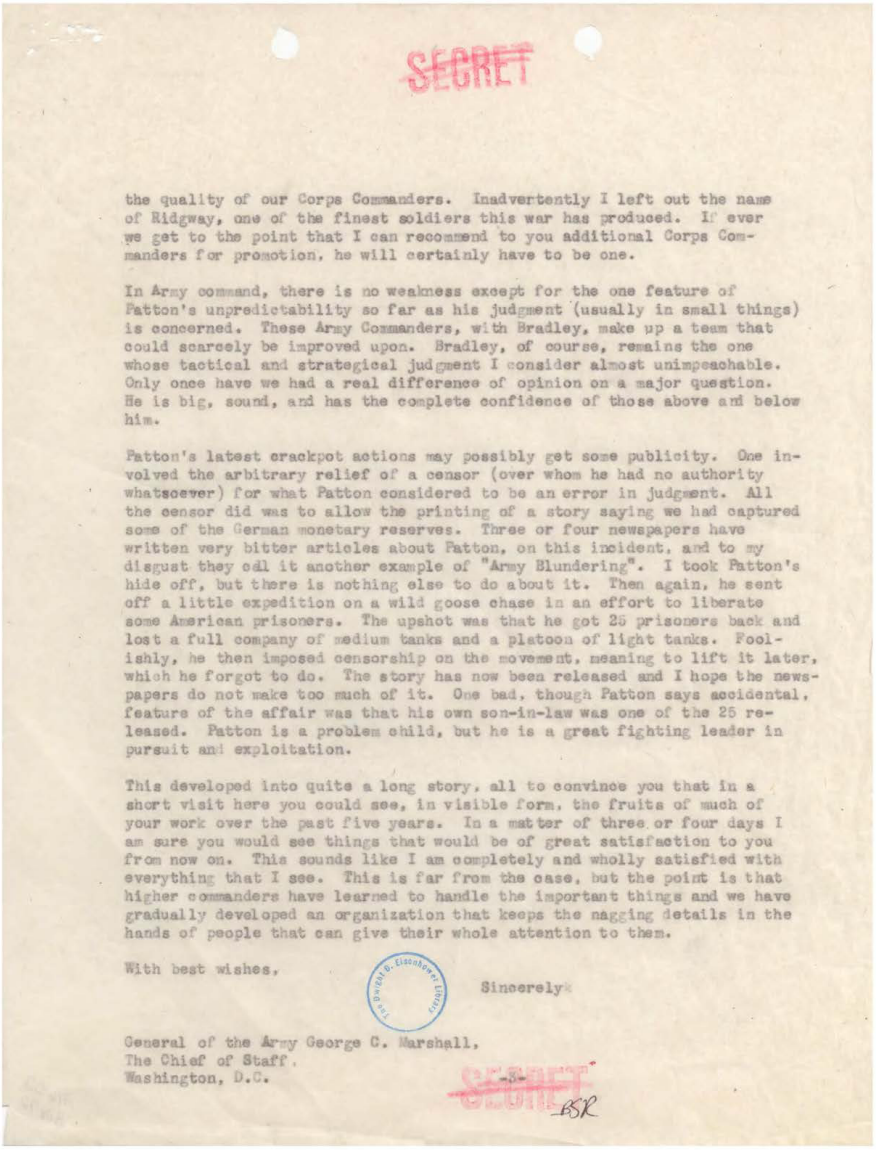

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the quality of our Corps Commanders. Inadvertently I left out the name of Ridgway, one of the finest soldiers this war has produced. If ever we get to the point that I can recommend to you additional Corps Commanders for promotion, he will certainly have to be one.

In Army command, there is no weakness except for the one feature of Patton's unpredictability so far as his judgment (usually in small things) is concerned. These Army Commanders, with Bradley, make up a team that could scarcely be improved upon. Bradley, of course, remains the one whose tactical and strategical judgment I consider almost unimpeachable. Only once have we had a real difference of opinion on a major question. He is big, sound, and has the complete confidence of those above and below him.

Patton's latest crackpot actions may possibly get some publicity. One involved the arbitrary relief of a censor (over whom he had no authority whatsoever) for what Patton considered to be an error in judgment. All the censor did was to allow the printing of a story saying we had captured some of the German monetary reserves. Three or four newspapers have written very bitter articles about Patton, on this incident, and to my disgust they call it another example of "Army Blundering". I took Patton's hide off, but there is nothing else to do about it. Then again, he sent off a little expedition on a wild goose chase in an effort to liberate some American prisoners. The upshot was that he got 25 prisoners back and lost a full company of medium tanks and a platoon of light tanks. Foolishly, he then imposed censorship on the movement, meaning to lift it later, which he forgot to do. The story has now been released and I hope the newspapers do not make too much of it. One bad, though Patton says accidental, feature of the affair was that his own son-in-law was one of the 25 released. Patton is a problem child, but he is a great fighting leader in pursuit and exploitation.

This developed into quite a long story, all to convince you that in a short visit here you could see, in visible form, the fruits of much of your work over the past five years. In a matter of three or four days I am sure you would see things that would be of great satisfaction to you from now on. This sounds like I am completely and wholly satisfied with everything that I see. This is far from the case, but the point is that higher commanders have learned to handle the important things and we have gradually developed an organization that keeps the nagging details in the hands of people that can give their whole attention to them.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

General of the Army George C. Marshall,
The Chief of Staff,
Washington, D.C.

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Source (credit to Daniel Patrick Brown, who provided the first two pages to me): *Dwight D. Eisenhower's Pre-Presidential Papers*, Principal File, Box 80, Marshall George C. (6); NAID #12005711, National Archives and Records Administration, Eisenhower, 1945.

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**Unit Fourteen: Holocaust Education and Memory**

## Why Teach the Holocaust?

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

Teaching the Holocaust affirms a broader obligation to educate future generations of the global community within a fair, tolerant, and academically rigorous environment grounded in the principles of patience, justice, accountability, empathy, and honesty. Holocaust education can empower learners to recognize and confront bullying, hatred, intolerance, racism, antisemitism, and anti-immigrant prejudice. In doing so, it encourages critical thinking about the consequences of discrimination and the responsibilities of individuals and societies to uphold human dignity and human rights.

We must educate, especially as genocide is still ongoing as I write the third edition of this book. Once, my students reviewed Genocide watch, a website that noted genocide scholar Gregory Stanton founded. All were shocked at how many genocides occurred after 1945. One student then asked why was the Holocaust only a paragraph in their high school history textbook?

Another said that they did not even know Germany was an enemy during the Second World War. So there seems to be an educational disconnect somewhere. All of us have a responsibility to fill that gap. Through education, we can become empowered to combat hate and stop genocide before it begins. Hate can be emotional, reactive, and stir up sentiments such as anger and blame. If something is going badly for an individual, or if a collective group has an issue about anything, whether micro or macro, hate can lead to blaming, and that need to blame someone for whatever the group is upset about can quickly lead to crimes against humanity. Education is a preventative.

Classes in Holocaust studies are essential, especially true since there are precious few Holocaust survivors left, some of whom still have not recorded their testimonies, as “there are only 400,000 [survivors] around the world” (Kirshner, 2020, para. 12). The next generation of scholars has the mandate to teach these histories so that the world never forgets. There is critical work to be done to record their testimonies.

With so few survivors left,

> this means that there are significantly fewer witnesses who can tell their incredible tales of survival on a first-hand basis to their children, grandchildren, Holocaust organizations, school assemblies, journalists, and historians. Once they are gone, their voices will forever be stilled, and the Holocaust will gradually fade into the vast stillness and dimness of obscurity. (Kirshner, 2020, para. 7)

In 2018, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany contracted a survey to determine what Millennials (18-34) knew about the Holocaust, noting that "the issue is that it is receding from memory" (Kirshner, 2020, para. 10). Few even knew what the word Holocaust meant, which is disconcerting, especially given the current rise of antisemitism, racism, and terror attacks against people, religious houses of worship, and public institutions. Therefore, more than ever before, Holocaust education is necessary.

To know how to recognize historical constructs of bullying, hate, indifference, and intolerance, provides educators with tools to empower their students (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2020). Becoming educated in genocide and understanding what bullying, hate and more lead to, Holocaust instruction presents both student and instructor with a multi-

perspective framework to present an ethical imperative to why Holocaust education matters.

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# Bringing the Past to the Present

*Chelsea Halling-Nye*

The global pandemic has forever changed education. As Chelsea Halling-Nye writes in her abstract,

> In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, many museums, including the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, moved all resources and trainings online. Through these new virtual offerings, teachers and students have the opportunity to continue to receive high-quality information and content without having to step through the doors of the building. Museums empower and educate audiences to learn from the past and strive for a better future.

Here, Halling-Nye explains the importance and the role of museums in education.

All my life, I have loved history. Even as a young child, I would dig through the "big kid books" on my parents' bookshelves, studying the grainy black and white photographs and trying to make sense of the complicated words. As I got older, I craved trips to libraries, galleries, planetariums, historical sites, and museums, but as I lived in a rural farming community on the Utah/Idaho border, most of these types of institutions were hours away. I dreamed of visiting Washington, DC and exploring the

wealth of history there. It wasn't until my senior year of high school that I finally had the opportunity to visit DC and explore the places that until then I had only read about.

I never imagined then that over a decade later I'd be living in DC and working at one of the museums that impacted me most deeply, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. I am honored to be able to work at this remarkable institution and help share its lessons and resources with teachers and knowledge-hungry students. Even if they have never been through the doors of the Museum, we strive to make the content as available and accessible as possible to anyone who seeks more information.

The Museum's website explains more about the development and history of the institution:

> On November 1, 1978, President Jimmy Carter established the President's Commission on the Holocaust, chaired by author and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel. The Commission submitted a report to President Carter on September 27, 1979, recommending the establishment of a memorial with three main components: a national Holocaust memorial/museum, an educational foundation, and a Committee on Conscience. In 1980, the United States Congress unanimously voted to form the United States Holocaust Memorial Council. Its mandate was the creation of a living memorial to the 6 million Jews and millions of

> other victims who perished during the Holocaust. (ushmm.org, n.d.)

While the events of the Holocaust happened on the other side of the world over half a century ago, the lessons and history transcend location and time.

The Museum strives to show its visitors the human cost of the Holocaust – that every victim and survivor had families, dreams, hopes, and fears. They were unique individuals, all living their own journey and experience. By turning an incomprehensible number – six million – into individual faces and stories, it aims to bring humanity and dignity back to every victim. My team, Education Initiatives, works hard to ensure that teachers and students have access to the Museum's rich library of content and feel confident as they navigate Holocaust history. Whether you are a new student to this history or a well-seasoned educator, we have resources for you.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Museum staff quickly realized that our resources needed to be more readily available online. The website ushmm.org/teach contains lessons,

bibliographies, videos, podcast links, virtual tours, posters, online exhibits, and more, so even while the Museum is closed to the public, visitors can still experience aspects of the Museum remotely and learn more about our foundational lessons. We also knew that teachers still needed to have access to our trainings, even if in a virtual setting. For example, in 2020, we hosted the Belfer National Conference for Educators online. While this conference typically hosts around 250 teachers in-person, we were able to reach over 1000 teachers, administrators, professors, education students, and more by holding it virtually, allowing us to share pedagogy, lessons, and training with three times the number of attendees we typically can reach in a single year.

The Holocaust Museum, and indeed all museums, are critical institutions in society today. They collect, conserve, and display irreplaceable artifacts, perform valuable research, discover and share untold stories, and educate audiences. Museums help provide tangible links to history and keep stories from being lost. Even when museum doors are closed, resources, online collections records, virtual tours, and trainings allow anyone with a hunger to

learn and explore the chance to do so. I am forever grateful for the opportunity to play a tiny part in helping educators gain the confidence and receive the training and resources they need to teach the next generation of students about the moral and spiritual questions raised by the history of the Holocaust and to humanize and preserve the memories of those who died.

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*The President's Commission on the Holocaust*. (n.d.). www.ushmm.org. https://www.ushmm.org/information/about-the-museum/presidents-commission

Here, we have one of the most interesting entries in this text. The author, Emily Minerof, developed a unique way to teach the Holocaust via a podcast during the COVID-10 pandemic. It started out as a project for my class on the History of Nazi Germany but developed into a unique instructional way to share history. I am proud of how Emily transformed this project into something very different for Holocaust education.

## **Women and the Holocaust**: **Podcast Transcript**

*Emily Minerof*

Hello and welcome to COVID N' College, a podcast by your host: me, Emily Minerof, a college student during the COVID times. I initially made this podcast as a one-and-done type of thing as a project for my Chemistry class. Long story short, it didn't have much to do with Chemistry. However, I found this platform as a really interesting way to convey information to others and I figured it would be a perfect way to do my history project. So, without further ado, the second episode of COVID N' College is about women during the Holocaust and women perpetrators of the Holocaust.

Before I get into the details of my actual project, I'm just gonna talk a little bit about this semester, what I've been doing, and how I got to this point. So, this is my fifth semester as an undergrad; however, I actually spent my first two years of undergrad at the University of Wisconsin- Madison. Then when COVID hit, I made the decision to start taking classes at Oakton College full time. Alright, before I go on, I know what you're thinking: "Emily, you did things a little backwards. You went to a four-year institution, did all your gen-eds, and now you're at a community college and you have no more gen-eds left."

Lucky for me I actually did have two gen-eds left, so there was something for me to do and I was excited to do them. Initially, I began taking classes at Oakton over the summer during COVID because I was so bored and at home and had nothing to do, and I was like, "You know what? I have some gen-eds left, I have time, why don't I just do it?" and to my luck, I found History 228, which was history of the Holocaust, and I- somehow, everything worked out for me, but I actually needed a European history credit for- to transfer for my degree. For whatever reason, when I run my, you

know, degree audit, my history credit specifically needs to be U.S. history or European history. So, when I saw this class about the Holocaust, I was like, “This is great! I get to learn about something I’m interested in and it transfers back to UW, which is super cool because UW Madison is really picky sometimes.”

I have always been interested about learning more about the Holocaust. I grew up in a Jewish household, um, I’m from Evanston, I also lived in Skokie for a period of time, so, you know that’s a very Jewish neighborhood. I traveled to Amsterdam and visited the Anne Frank house, so I had a lot of knowledge of the Holocaust, like that it had happened and, you know, very known things that had happened, but I didn’t learn much in depth about it and I have always wanted to learn more. So, when I saw this class, I was like, “This is great! I’m so excited, I’m gonna learn something in depth about a topic that I think is really fascinating.”

So, the class starts, we start learning, and there’s a topic about women in the Holocaust and how women played a role, whether it was active or passive, all sorts of stuff, and it was something I had never heard about. I had never known that women

played such a large role, so that was something that I was really interested in because I was so, like, “Wow, this is just so crazy to me,” so when the opportunity to take History 200, the independent study of, you know, the history of Germany, I was like, “Heck yeah, let’s do it,” and now I get to do a whole project on this topic that I learned about that I never knew about before.

Long story short, I have an immense amount of gratitude for Oakton College for giving me an opportunity that I don’t think I would have had if COVID did not happen, and I have a lot of gratitude for Professor Adelé-Marie, who inspired me to keep learning about this topic and has been very supportive in my learning endeavors, and also the Jewish Studies department at Oakton because they have so many resources and honestly, every time I learn something about the Holocaust from the Jewish Studies department it’s always something I’ve never learned before. So, thanks for listening thus far, sorry it took four minutes to get to the point, but I hope you enjoy this podcast and I hope you learn a little something about women in the Holocaust.

So, the first thing I really want to talk about is the role women did play in the Holocaust because initially I never really thought of women playing a large role. I thought it was more of a passive role, a compliance role where nothing was done to stop the Holocaust, but nothing was added to the violence that was occurring. I want to talk about how women were mobilized by Hitler to make the Holocaust as powerful as it was. And I want to clarify that when I say I didn't really think of women as having a large role, I don't mean that in a sexist way or a misogynist type of way, I mean that more in a way of at that time in the 1920's, women did not have a lot of power; so, it didn't occur to me that that is what happened. And, in the simplest of terms, women did perpetrate the Holocaust. Women did play a role. It wasn't a question of "did women play a role or not play a role?" because they certainly did, so that's the first point I want to establish because that is definitely a misconception that people have and in order to move on to the actual roles that they played, you've got to know that they did, in fact, play a role.

Just a personal tidbit here, but I grew up going to JRC (Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation). That was my congregation and temple that I went to and I remember at one point, I can't remember what year, but it was very close to the year that the Holocaust Museum opened up in Skokie, so maybe sometime around 2010, but I remember that during the high holidays my temple had to last-minute change the location of services because there were people protesting outside of the temple. You know, the signs had swastikas and slander and terrible things on them, but what I remember specifically about that was that there were women there with their children, like, infants sometimes in the strollers, and the women were participating just as much as the men were and even had the children, you know, the toddlers who could walk participating as well, so that adds to the compliance and the not knowing and more so that the hatred of Jews and antisemitism is still out there.

Now, some people know that there are women like Irma Grese, among others, who were very publicly known for actively playing a role in being a woman in the Holocaust and perpetuating

violence, but what a lot of people don't know is how Hitler mobilized the woman's vote in the Third Reich. In fact, the number of women that did vote is what made it possible for the National Socialist Party to rise to power, because the National Socialist Party gave women the right to vote. However, I think it is important to note that during the rise of the National Socialist Party and the Nazi party, the country of Germany was still in the Weimar Republic, which was a democratic form of government. Once Hitler took over and made himself a dictator essentially, he changed that to a more, obviously a National Socialist government, where it wasn't a democracy at that point anymore.

But Hitler, according to Helen Boak who wrote *Mobilizing women for Hitler: the female Nazi voter*, um, more than fifty percent of the vote was the female vote and it was clear that in areas, in 1932 in Protestant areas, the NSDAP/ the National Socialist Party was receiving more votes from women than it had from men. So, a question a lot of people may be asking themselves at this point is, "Why did Hitler appeal to women so much so that more women than men voted for him?" and that's a great question.

There are several answers to this question, one being he made women feel important by targeting them with his manipulative propaganda, making women feel that they had power and giving them the right to vote. Obviously, if women had never had the ability to vote in the past, having this opportunity now is gonna make them feel important. Another essential piece to why Hitler made women feel compelled to vote was that he allowed them, um, on November 12th, 1918, to attend political movements and meetings and parties.

Not only could women vote, but they could also participate in political discussion and actually know that they were doing. In the 1920's and 30's, women were more or less housewives and what made them compelled to vote was that these political meetings, parties, etc., they could be held in the home, so essentially politics became accessible to women and it was able to reach housewives, which was the majority of women, uh, aged over twenty. What's interesting is that many of these meetings consisted of women's issues, which sounds kind of backwards, like, why would a woman vote for the National Socialist Party if

they want rights for women? But that inherently was backwards. Um, well at the time, when, like, obviously I was not around in, you know, pre-World War II/post-World War I Germany, but in that time the climate was insane.

They had just come out of a war, there was a loss of nationalism, the democracy was failing, women didn't have the right to vote, so when something positive happens when, you know, the women get the right to vote and when they get access to something that they didn't have before, that's one positive thing. So, at the time women may have not considered the negative factors of national socialism but took it as an opportunity to discuss problems that they wanted to fix for themselves. On the surface that sounds great, but obviously this led to terrible things. Um, what's also super important to note about this is that young women were the ones doing this. Older women felt more uncomfortable according to Helen Boak in that article. But again, like the current election that just happened, uh, young voters are essential and can make a large difference.

For example, I am in Wisconsin, I became a resident and this year. Wisconsin was blue and I voted in Wisconsin, so, you know, the young vote is important. Not to say anything about my political beliefs, that could be a whole podcast on its own, but the gist of what I'm saying is that the young vote is really important to the overall vote. Basically, what Hitler did is in the beginning of the Nazi Party's rise to National Socialism and dictatorship, he got the women to be on his side by allowing them to vote and giving them a platform to voice their problems like, you know, women's rights, women's ability to be in the workplace, abortion, things like that and he gave women the power to have a voice in politics and that's what let them to voting because he gave them that opportunity.

Helen Boak also writes that the role of a housewife, like, women expressed that the role of a housewife should be recognized as a profession, and honestly any woman at that time, like, that makes sense. If someone told me right now, "Oh you're a college student, that should be considered a job," I'd be like, "You know? You raise a fair point." Now I am in no way saying that

what Hitler did to mobilize the women's vote was right, I'm just saying how it makes sense that it appealed to women. And more so, women felt important because they could actually contribute to Hitler's ideal Aryan race. Women could have children, they could actually populate this perfect ideal race that Hitler wanted, so since they could do something and actually contribute to the effort, that made them feel, like, important and that they could do something.

It was no longer just men going to war and the women staying home and taking care of the children, it was now women can actually participate by doing other things other than going to war. They can actually go to political rallies or they could voice their political opinions, or they could have a ton of babies you know, things like this. And what's important to know here is that in the Weimar Republic, that was a democracy so someone with the majority of votes would have one power, right? But with the Third Reich coming and the change to National Socialism, the way government worked was that however much percentage of a certain party was voted for was how much was represented in the government. So slowly over time, the Nazi Party gained seats in

the government, like they started with a really small amount and then over time more people voted and there was more representation but since the government was formatted in a way that that was possible, that's how the Nazi Party was able to get their place in government and then slowly, over time, take up more space and be more represented.

If we think in terms of numbers, giving fifty percent of the population, you know, women, a right to vote that's certainly going to sway an election or voting process or campaign because that's a lot of people. Although Helen Boak notes that it is clear that before 1932 the Nationalist Socialist party was attracting women's votes without targeting women as a group, but it did not actively seek to win the female vote until 1932 until it realized the significance of the women's vote if that makes sense. So, at first, they were targeting more votes and then they realized that, you know, the women's vote makes a big difference so, "Let's do it!" Just to clarify, when I say them or it or they, I'm referring to the National Socialist party.

Boak ends her paper with saying, “The way in which millions of women cast their vote ensured that women’s rights would not be on the electoral agenda again for some considerable time.” Now when you dissect that, women were voting for their own rights. Women had the opportunity to vote against abortion laws and against things that would harm them. So, at that time women, maybe in the beginning of the Holocaust and the beginning of World War II, didn’t realize that by exercising this power to vote they were also being manipulated into something terrible. So, when the Holocaust started and Hitler rose to power, that wasn’t the start of the Holocaust.

The start of the Holocaust, I mean obviously this is arguable, but the way Hitler rose to power was very well thought-out, if that’s a good way to put it. He slowly gained power over time and he slowly did things so that people wouldn’t find, like, the general public wouldn’t find what he was doing outrageous. So, if he started with the Final Solution or something so terrible, I mean that is terrible but, another thing that was terrible, for example, people would have been outraged, right? But since he

started slowly, people weren't able to see the malicious intent that he had until much later. So overall, by mobilizing women's ability to vote in, you know, the end of the Weimar Republic and the beginning of the Third Reich, that was how he gained a lot of public approval and support of what he was doing, and without that it may have been difficult for Hitler to carry out the rest of his outrageous acts during the Holocaust and that's a role that women played, whether they understood what was going on or whether they understood that it was manipulative, I'll never know, we'll never know, but that's where it started. And again, with Hitler's very well-thought-out plan in the beginning, you know, women getting the right to vote and voting for themselves and their health or whatever, like, that doesn't seem outrageous at the time so that's how he got women interested in politics.

Obviously there were some women who committed very active and malicious acts towards Jews and other target groups during the Holocaust, and there were also women who didn't do things that were so malicious and really acted more passive, but the idea of compliance in this case really contributed to the violence of

the Holocaust and, obviously this is hard to argue but in this period of time, I think it is valid to argue that that women who continued to support the cause and support the war effort, even though it was non-violent, were compliant and therefore contributed to the violence of the Holocaust. Before I get into the heinous acts that women actively caused, people such as Irma Grese who committed very violent acts as an S.S. guard, I want to talk about how women got there.

Obviously, women were allowed to work in the concentration camps and when you think about that, people didn't just offer to work in the concentration camps. There had to be malicious intent. There had to be something deep within that person, deeply rooted antisemitism. It's not some job that people would just pick up because it's easy and it's there, it's not one of those jobs. That's a job that someone understands what they're doing and wants to do it. Back in History 228, there was a textbook we used for that class called *Problems in the European Civilization: The Holocaust Fourth Edition* by Donald Niewyk and there were, I want to say six chapters and they were very detailed,

and it talked about the motivation of the killers, it's actually chapter two, and it talks about how basically there was no way that people didn't know what they were doing. But this was also a question of compliance, so Christopher Browning, who writes part of this chapter, writes that, "To break ranks and step out, to adopt overtly non-conformist behavior was simply beyond most of the men. It was easier for them to shoot. If the men of the Reserve Police Battalion 101 could become killers, what group of men could not?" And what that means is basically, people, I mean soldiers, this obviously isn't about women but I'm gonna talk about the mentality because the mentality between men and women, I mean obviously I don't know but it probably could not have differed that much.

They both committed acts that were terrible, so it was just easier, once you were in it was just easier to comply with what you were told. Hitler gave a lot of blanket approvals to people, so they didn't feel the blame for what they did. They were like, "Well, Hitler okay-ed it, so I can do it," so it was easier for people to just listen and do terrible things than to stand out and do what's right

because that would cost them their lives, and obviously at this time people are going to act selfishly because they want to live. Robert J. Lifton, in this chapter of this textbook as well, talks about how people would basically have two senses of self. They would have their normal self and their Nazi self, and they would differentiate these personalities so that, you know, they were, it was essentially splitting a personality so that you, personally as your personal self, would not be committing these terrible acts and you cannot attribute what you were doing as your Nazi personality to yourself personality.

Obviously, that's a more psychological explanation, but basically what he says is, "The Auschwitz self is also called upon the relation mechanism of derealization, of divesting oneself from the actuality of what one is part of, not experiencing it as real." Later he says, "The numbing of Auschwitz self was greatly aided by the diffusion of responsibility," like I mentioned before. More so, he says, "The Auschwitz self of the individual doctor," at this point he's talking about the Nazi doctors, "could readily feel 'it is not I who killed.' He was likely to perceive what he did as a

combination of a military order designated role." So, when people were told to do terrible things, their mentality was basically, "Well someone else told me to do it so I'm not to blame here."

Now like I said before with women, it's a little bit different because women had to actually marry someone of higher status or do something to be able to become a guard in the concentration camp. For men, it was a job that was expected of them, but for women it was a job that they had to seek out even more. So, they wanted to do terrible things and then once they were put in this position of, "Well, I need to listen to my superior," obviously they committed the act because they were told to but there's also something that I feel is more deeply rooted, and it was malicious intent.

Later in this anthology, there is an excerpt from Zoe Waxman called *Women in the Holocaust* which greatly details, again, women's roles. She writes, "To show that people are fallible and act just like human beings is not to demonize them, but to attempt to present a more rounded picture of responses to extreme suffering." So, what she's basically saying is that it's important to

note that it wasn't just one group or the other, this was real, and this is happening. She later says, "Little reference is made to the Jewish women who, as a result of intolerable circumstances, acted contrary to traditional expectations of female behavior." She here is referencing some women who would put the survival of themselves above their children, and some of the female Jewish Kapos who came to mimic the behavior of the S.S. guards. Now Waxman is talking about both the women in the concentration camps and the women who acted as guards in the concentration camps, but overall, her message is that women, or anybody really, can act in really unexpected ways under extreme circumstances, and this shows both in the sense of a victim and in the sense of a perpetrator.

The point I'm trying to make here is that, although it is a little confusing, the women who stepped up to do more than just act in politics and have children and listen to the propaganda and simply comply with what was going on in the world, the women who actually became S.S. guards, the women who committed acts of violence against the Jews and other targeted groups, they did

more than just comply. They actually committed violence. I am also saying that compliance is violence, but it's important to know that it wasn't just compliance. Women did not just comply; women also did contribute actively to the Holocaust.

So, from *Jewish Virtual Library*, there is a woman named Vera Wohlauf and she married captain Julius Wohlauf. In 1942, he was the commanding officer of the First Company Police Battalion 101. They did terrible things. They did mass executions of Jews in Eastern Poland, and she married him knowing that she did this, like, she married him! There's no way that you can marry someone who supports something so terrible and not support it yourself.

Even more so, *Jewish Virtual Library* says that these wives of these people, of the men in the Police Battalion 101, they would witness all these terrible acts against Jews and the deportation of all the Jews and they would just sit and watch and that was a way that these women liked to spend their time. They enjoyed it. Another woman was named Hermine Braunsteiner and she was a female guard in various camps, and not just camps, she also worked in killing centres, and she was tried for her heinous acts

and she actually ended up in New York, given U.S. citizenship and then it was revoked when she was tried in Germany and sentenced to life in prison.

Another woman who actively contributed was named Magda Goebbels, forgive me for saying these names wrong, but she was actually the former wife of Joseph Goebbels, who was an important man in the Holocaust, and she killed her own children, willingly with force. She actually decided to name all of her children after Hitler by giving them each a name that started with the letter H. The point is that she was a huge admirer of Hitler and then her and her husband committed suicide themselves, and it was later thought that she killed her children because of what they would hear about what her and her husband did as Nazis, and like, they would hear of what their parents did and be so disgusted that they had to kill them.

There was another woman known, excuse my language, Ilse Koch, the Bitch of Buchenwald, and she was married to an S.S. commander and she eventually also became the commander of a camp. She was sentenced to life in prison, but it was reduced

eventually, she was rearrested by the West Germans who sentenced her to life in prison, but when she ended up dying and they found the letter that she wrote, she wrote, “I cannot do otherwise. Death is the only deliverance.” So people were so passionate about their hatred towards the Jews and perpetrating the Holocaust that they would rather die as a result. They would give up their life to do what they did. Margaret White, another woman, she married William Joyce, the leader of the British National Socialist League and then became the secretary, so she, obviously I don’t know why she married him, but I don’t think it’s a coincidence that she was able to have that position as a woman without having married her husband.

I could go on and on listing different women who did different terrible things, who could show you that women did perpetrate the Holocaust and women did end up committing heinous acts and actively contributed, but the point is here is that it’s, people can’t go on learning about the Holocaust think that women were not as susceptible to acting terrible under extreme situations.

In the preface of Professor Wendy Adelé-Marie's book that she graciously let me use as a source for this podcast, the book is titled *Women as Nazis: Female Perpetrators of the Holocaust*, and in the preface, she says, "it's important to remember that German and other women during World War II played an important role in all levels of the war, from maintaining farms while the men were away to conducting business for the Nazi regime." Millions were not perpetrators, and it is unfair to portray all women that way, but women's contributions, whether to the benefit of society or not, have been largely ignored, especially in the context of war. So basically, people didn't recognize, like obviously not all women did terrible things, but it is so crucial to not ignore the women who did do terrible things.

Professor Adelé-Marie later says, "It's hard to understand why women would do something so terrible against themselves," because at the end of the day the Nazi party did not support women. However, she realized that, with regard to crimes against humanity, there was no separation of the sexes, which is essentially what I'm trying to emphasize here. She says, "War atrocities

cannot be segregated by gender." And it's hard to understand that because for so long, there wasn't any evidence or data or public information that people knew about women, so they just assumed that women did not play a role. And of course, I want to believe that women did good, and there are women out there who did wonderful things like saving children, providing homes for children, risking their own lives to house these children, but at the end of the day, it's, you have to know that gender doesn't discriminate against perpetrators of something terrible.

Given that women were not typically guards of concentration camps, they actually volunteered to do it. They volunteered. And when, like, going back to the mobilization of women's votes, when you give a group of people something that gives them more ability to participate in life, government, politics, etc., that's something that women, or anybody really, would take. But here, Professor Adelé-Marie says, "If women return to the domestic sphere, and if the enemy of German man was destroyed, the Nazi ideal of masculinity would remain supreme, and Germany would better for it." So basically, by mobilizing the women to

vote, women were not the enemy anymore. It was the Jews and the other targeted groups. It was a way to change the scapegoat. So how could women who volunteered to do something or married someone with status and got a job become actively violent and horrific in the Holocaust?

And that's really because women, as Professor Adelé-Marie puts it, they were in this domestic lifestyle. They were moms, they were housewives, and then, once given the opportunity to do something else, they fully stepped into that role. So, if a woman became an S.S. guard, they would do what an S.S. guard would do regardless of their gender. They would do what the male S.S. guards do as well, and that's the importance of women perpetrators is that because they were women, that doesn't make a difference of the crimes they committed. They still committed them regardless of gender or sex. They did them because they had the power to do so.

Again, with the sense of purpose, when women held these positions, and this is no excuse, only a reason, they felt purpose in what they did. They felt that they had importance, and again that

stems back to propaganda, Hitler's very well-thought-out way to manipulate people, but he was able to manipulate women who previously did not have the opportunity to have a terrible role such as an S.S. guard, or even more than that, to become someone who can because they can get that power.

Another thing is by asking women to have children, he could be seen as protecting womanhood, according to Professor Adelé-Marie. She writes, "But sought to downplay the sexuality of women while promoting fertility. He did this by portraying himself as the protector of German womanhood against the incursions of the Vampire Master, which was the Jew. Overall, Hitler made women feel important even though they could never actually hold positions of actual authority or even be considered equal. On another note, as men were getting sent to war, women were able to fulfill the roles that men had previously had and that made them less domesticated, less of a housewife and more functional in society, and that was a thing that women liked. That was a thing that was good for women.

However, the other hand, you know, the other side of that problem or that scenario is that they were contributing to the war effort, which was inevitably bad. Like I said before, women were encouraged to have as many babies as possible with different men so that they could help create the Aryan race, but even though women's sexuality was highly judged by men, this was a way that women could be sexually free because they were helping the effort of National Socialism. So essentially women were given all of these things like the ability to talk about politics, engage in politics, vote, have jobs that were not in the house and become more equal in terms of what they can do that men can do, but were never seen as equal and were used as women for a man's gain. Not just a man's gain, but a dictatorship's gain, if you will.

As we come to the end of this podcast, there are a few more things I want to talk about. One being Irma Grese, who is infamous for the crimes she committed as a woman during the Holocaust as an S.S. guard, as someone who seemingly had authority and then I also want to conclude things. So, let's start with Irma Grese. Irma Grese was a concentration camp guard. She was only twenty-one,

and in retrospect, I'm twenty years old turning twenty-one in April, and as a twenty-year-old I really have no idea what I'm doing with my life and for someone so young and so impressionable to do something so heinous says a lot.

She served at Auschwitz and later Bergen-Belsen, actually just Belsen, where she was later arrested by the British. She was condemned to death and was hanged. Um, she was actually beat by her father for proudly wearing her S.S. uniform, and she was said to have a love affair with Josef Mengele- forgive me for the names- but he was one of the doctors in Auschwitz who, again, did terrible things. To that regard of her relationship with him, I don't think it's a coincidence that their relationship existed and her role as a guard existed. So I know that was a lot of information and a lot of opinionated things too, so hopefully you're still with me, but I want to summarize how Hitler mobilized women and then in turn made them perpetrators. So initially, national socialism appealed to women because it gave women all these things. It gave women a voice in politics. It gave women the ability to do things like work outside the home. It gave women the ability to voice their opinion

about women's rights, and that was something that was great for women.

In a backwards way, it gave women the opportunity to be sexually free because children were encouraged. But in turn, that was a manipulative thing that he did because by giving women fake power- well, they believed it was real but to Hitler, he knew obviously that it was not actual power- by giving them this power and making them feel important, he could coerce them into being for the cause of national socialism. So once he gave the women all of these things, it makes sense for women to be like, "Well I like national socialism because it does all of this stuff for me as a woman and that's good". Thus, women, once they supported the cause, began to volunteer to be S.S. guards and work in concentration camps and over time as they would do these jobs, they would get promoted to higher levels of power because they felt a purpose in the thing that they did because they could. And that's how Hitler mobilized the women's vote and in turn had women support the cause.

He coerced them into believing that it was something good while having them commit heinous acts and at this point, you can't say that they were phased by Hitler's whatever. Because at that point, they believed in national socialism. By giving women rights, they also would need to believe in the terrible things that Hitler preached because that was the only way they could get it, right? Women began to believe in Hitler's nationalist, socialist ideals and that's how women perpetrated the Holocaust.

At this point, you may be thinking, "How can these women be blamed for what they did?" because they were coerced and manipulated into following national socialism. My answer to that is despite the way they were convinced, coerced, however they followed national socialism, these women still did it and believed in what they did until they died. Irma Grese for example, when she was hanged the last thing she said was, in German, translated to English: "Quickly." She didn't have remorse; she knew what she did was wrong. And like I said, there were other people who, when they died- other women who were tried and sentenced to death, they believed that what they did was right and said death was the

only way. Alright, and that wraps up this podcast. I hope you enjoyed it and I hope you learned something about women perpetrators, why women felt that national socialism appealed to them, how women went from being coerced into national socialism into actually carrying out the beliefs of national socialism, and how women perpetrated the Holocaust. Thanks for listening.

**Show Notes**

To listen to this podcast, search *COVID n College* or Emily Minerof on Spotify, or where you listen to podcasts. Look for the episode titled "HIS 200: Women and the Holocaust".

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**Unit Fifteen: The Holocaust, Literature, & Philosophy**

Holocaust literature is essential to any study of the Holocaust because it preserves the voices of those who endured it while revealing the many ways survivors made meaning of unimaginable loss. Through women's survivor testimonies, this chapter explores questions of memory, identity, resilience, and authorial agency, highlighting the unique perspectives women bring to Holocaust studies. By examining these narratives, readers gain a deeper understanding of how testimony not only documents history but also shapes collective memory and expands the study of the Holocaust through gendered experience. Philosophy is equally critical to any study of the Holocaust, but how can we explain the unexplainable? We can look to philosophy to understand how faith was challenged, denied, reformed, disregarded, and preserved during a time of total genocide. Philosophical inquiry invites us to grapple with the impossible question of why the Holocaust occurred and to consider its enduring ethical, theological, and existential implications. Together, these chapters provide complementary approaches to understanding one of history's

darkest periods, one grounded in lived experience and testimony, the other in philosophical reflection. Renowned Holocaust scholar Hana Waisserová, associate professor of practice and section head of Czech and Central European Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Department of Modern Languages and Literatures examines women Holocaust survivors and gendered agency in testimonial literature. Then, Oakton College Professor of Philosophy Peter Hudis provides a critical look at one of the 20th century's most influential Jewish philosophers, Emmanuel Levinas.

## Delayed Voices, Recalibrated Agency: Gendered Agency in Testimonial Literature by Women Holocaust Survivors

*Hana Waisserova*

**Abstract**

This paper analyzes the literary testimonies of Czechoslovak women Holocaust survivors - Heda Margolius Kovály, Zdenka Fantlová, Dita Kraus, and Franci Rabinek Epstein -who resettled in Western diasporas and whose works were published belatedly, both globally and in their homeland. Examining the intersection of Holocaust memory, political exile,

and foreign publication contexts, this study highlights how these authors exercised profound women's authorial agency by transforming traumatic persecution into active resistance, defiance, and healing. Compelled to navigate new cultural frameworks, foreign audiences, and conscious language choices between Czech and English, these writers produced intimate, nuanced narratives that transcend national boundaries. Their works employ disarming humor, uncritical nostalgia, and critical self-scrutiny to dismantle persistent myths surrounding the female experience while systematically avoiding sentimental artifice. By evaluating the delayed domestic and international reception of these texts, this research explores how belated publication contexts recalibrate scholarly understandings of gendered Holocaust literature. Rather than presenting these authors merely as passive witnesses to trauma, the analysis foregrounds their agency in actively shaping collective memory, challenging historical oversights, and asserting a distinct form of pathos often overlooked in domestic discourse. Ultimately, this paper demonstrates how these delayed literary testimonials serve as powerful instruments of self-definition and

resilience, fostering scholarly dialogue and opening crucial space for a more inclusive, global interpretation of exile, trauma, and women's literary voices.

**Introduction**

"There are many kinds of Jewishness, and everyone has the right not only to define one's Jewishness as one feels is correct, but also to be accepted as a Jew by others just as one is a Jew according to one's own definition and not according to the cliches of others."
- Marcel R. Marcus (1989; cited in Čapková 2012)

This paper introduces and discusses testimonial literature by Jewish women authors [born in Czechoslovakia] published with significant delay; though, with the exception of Helga Weiss-Hošková, they all went into exile, and their texts have been primarily available in English rather than in Czech. It considers texts by Heda Kovály (1919-2010; published in 1973, 1986), Zdenka Fantlová (1922-2022, published since 1996), Helga Weiss-Hošková (born 1929; published since 2013), Dita Kraus (1929-2025; published since 2020), Franci Rabinek Epstein (1920-1989, published in 2020). Their postwar immigration was often driven by

the Communist coup d'état in 1948 and by looming fears of a new totalitarianism and its antisemitism.

Why was there such a delay in publishing these Holocaust testimonial texts by women survivors? Initially, it seemed the delayed publication of these memoirs - both in the authors' Czechoslovak homeland and in the West - stems from a complex interplay of severe trauma, emotional toll, and societal expectations. Many women survivors found their horrific experiences almost beyond words and difficult to process immediately. In post-war societies, rigid gender roles often dictated that women prioritize rebuilding family life over engaging in public storytelling. Furthermore, fear of social stigma and judgment kept many silent; as Dita Kraus noted in her memoir *A Delayed Life*, David Ben-Gurion allegedly claimed that "*Every man who survived was a Capo, and every woman a prostitute*" (Kraus 237). This pervasive suspicion, compounded by survivor's guilt and post-war publication landscapes, created a heavy barrier to sharing their stories publicly until much later, when they eventually became more recognized. This decades-long delay is

symptomatic of a broader systemic issue: women writers often faced a profound lack of mentorship, resources, and institutional support. Beyond these structural barriers, the fear of rejection loomed large. This fear was grounded in the reality that the subject matter was too harrowing for the public, as evidenced, for example, by the case of Primo Levi, whose foundational work was initially rejected by publishers for this reason. Such a climate of disbelief and dismissal naturally caused women like Rabinek Epstein, Zdenka Fantlová, Dita Kraus, Helga Weiss-Hošková, or even Heda Kovály [whose Holocaust experience is shadowed by her critique of postwar Communism and its injustice] to hesitate in sharing their private records in the complex publication landscapes and world divided by the Iron Curtain and its geopolitics.

Prior to 1989, the publication landscape surrounding testimonial literature in Central Europe was heavily constrained by ideological imperatives: Holocaust memoirs were severely limited and co-opted into official state narratives of "anti-fascist heroism," while accounts of communist injustice were strictly banned and forced into underground *samizdat* networks. Conversely, Western

exile and transnational literary centers published some texts during this period; there was a politicized agenda too: Czech exile publishing houses and Western publishers actively leveraged accounts of communist repression (and its antisemitism) as potent anti-totalitarian critiques. In the West, there was a major surge in women's testimonial writing during the 1980s inspired by the growth of feminist studies and more interest in women's experiences in general. Following the political shifts of 1989 (when the Iron Curtain was dismantled and Communist regimes failed and were replaced by democracies), Central Europe underwent a complex dual dynamic. While the opening of local archives prompted some literary revival, scholars initially struggled to integrate gender perspectives into the national canon, though interest in memory simultaneously triggered a domestic publication boom. Driven by an urgent desire to fill the historical *blank spaces* of the totalitarian era, this post-1989 explosion finally established women's literature, historiography, and testimony as an important part of the region's re-emergent cultural identity. However, many literary testimonials were published first in

English or gained global recognition, while being overlooked and underappreciated in Central Europe.

The dominance of English as a global, hegemonic language creates a complex, in-between space for writers navigating exile, diaspora, or international contexts. Within the global Anglophone canon, these women authors have been frequently framed through categories like transnational, exile, or ethnic literature. While adopting English granted the authors access to a global platform and market [such as especially with the English editions of texts of Kovaly, Epstein, Weiss-Hošková], some reception have been filtered through an exoticized lens, positioning them primarily as witnesses or historical interpreters of life under Nazis or Communism - such as authors who escaped from under Iron Curtain prior to 1989, became writers tasked with detailing life under totalitarianism. In this regard, *Under the Cruel Star. A Life in Prague, 1941-19* by Heda Kovaly became an international bestseller and global textbook on life under totalitarianism, while also serving as an influential text showcasing some forms of women's agency. This text came out in dozens of editions and

reprints since its first publication in the USA in the early 1970s by the Czech exile press, followed by editions in 1986, 1997, and many others by Western presses. This proves that immigration from communist Czechoslovakia, which was banning Holocaust memorializations, often allowed publication to come out abroad, triggering interest in Czechoslovakia, later the Czech Republic (since 1993 Velvet Divorce), when Holocaust memory could blossom only after 1989, with the arrival of democracy. Thus, these general geopolitical factors and publication trends can explain a lot; it is not the full story.

However, my understanding of the importance of recognizing women's agency as one of the major publication factors progressed with the publication of *Franci's War* by Franci Rabinek Epstein. I realized that the publication problem also closely coexisted with gender bias and gender stereotypes, which were not met in these narratives, such as in *Franci's War,* a candid "*text far ahead of its time… where Franci focused entirely on the experiences of women*" (Epstein 236-237). This text openly writes about abortion, sexual barter, lesbian relations, pregnancies, and a

variety of survival strategies without moral judgment, though these survival activities were commonly attributed to prostitution and dishonesty. In other words, the delayed publications bear witness and share women's experiences**,** which were often marginalized or overlooked as early Holocaust narratives focused primarily on women's caring, nurturing, and sisterhood as modes of survival (Waxman 2003). Though there were early narratives published by women survivors, such as texts by Olga Lengyel, Gisella Perl (known as a gynecologist in Auschwitz), Vladka Meed, Ilse Aichinger (author of *Herod's Children*), or Czech author Zdenka Berger's *Tell Me Another Morning* (1961), however, certain narratives that would showcase other forms of "problematic" women's agency would not be published until relatively recently.

In the early Holocaust testimonial literature, women were often portrayed as victims or caregivers, rather than as active participants in the Holocaust who resisted and had multiple forms of morally ambiguous agency (Hájková 2013, 2021, 2025). Overall, there has been a lack of recognition of the women writing on/speaking about varieties of experiences, as the contributions

and sacrifices of women during the Holocaust were not always fully recognized, acknowledged, or understood. Women authors faced challenges if they decided to publish, as they had limited opportunities to publish their memoirs or have their stories recognized by mainstream publishers, combined with much silence in a post-war world that often blamed victims or was uneasy seeing women in certain roles. This is well explained in the complicated publication story of Franci Rabinek Epstein's *Franci's War (2020),* which became an international bestseller.

**Publication Delay of a Story with Undesirable Agency: Publication of *Franci's War* by Franci Rabinek Epstein (2020)**

Franci Rabinek Epstein's identity as a highly assimilated Prague Jew and proud Czechoslovak citizen was shaped by a world that would later struggle to acknowledge her testimony - even after her exile in New York. Helen Epstein (daughter of Franci Rabinek Epstein) shared how complicated it was to publish her mother's memoir in the book's "Afterword." Regarding the origins of this text: Franci wrote her diary in the work camps, but it was found and destroyed. In the mid-1950s, she retold her experience to

doctors and a psychoanalyst, as she suffered many medical and mental problems, and even a breakdown. In 1974, she retold her story for *William E. Wiener Oral History of American Holocaust Survivors* on tape. This probably validated her experience and encouraged her to write it down again. The first version, called *Roundtrip,* included her preface titled "explanation" (233-4). In 1973 and 1974, she was most likely finalizing the memoir, being encouraged by her salon's client, Marya Mannes, a prominent journalist, to seek publication. Another client, literary agent Cyrilli Abels, sent it to publication in 1975. It was rejected. The literary agent suggested that in the mid-1970s, American Jews wished to distance themselves from the survivors, and university Holocaust studies were barely born, as memorial projects like USHMM would open only in 1993.

Franci was very likely wounded by the rejection, and in 1975 she passed her text to her daughter, already a well-known journalist and writer, Helen Epstein, who wrote that "*The last thing I wanted in 1975 was my mother's book*" (237). In 1979, Helen Epstein published her bestselling *Children of the Holocaust*,

focusing on the intergenerational transmission of trauma and resilience in the second generation. Only after Franci's illness in 1989 did she start writing the family story of her Austrian and Czechoslovak maternal ancestors in *Where She Came From: A Daughter's Search for Her Mother's History* (1997). Furthermore, Helen re-translated Heda Kovaly's *Under a Cruel Star*, translated Vlasta Schonova's memoir *To Be An Actress,* and kept working with survivors and on survivors. Only in 2017 did a friend alert Helen to her mother's videotaped testimony, and she re-read her mother's memoir. Still, it was not a straightforward publication journey. However, *Franci's War* eventually found a home at Viking Books (a division of Penguin Random House). By now, there are four English editions, about twenty foreign-language editions as well as Kindle, audiobook, and many digital editions. The book received widespread acclaim from readers and critics. It was praised for its raw honesty, vivid descriptions, and the author's remarkable resilience - and praised for portraying women's agency in all its colors during the Holocaust. However, each featured belatedly published text seems to have its own story and trajectory.

**Heda Kovály: Double Persecution and Exilic Voice**

Heda Kovály's seminal work, best known in English as *Under a Cruel Star: A Life in Prague, 1941–1968*, illustrates how political censorship delays historical testimony. Having survived the Holocaust, Kovály faced a second wave of persecution under Czechoslovakia's totalitarian regime when her husband, Rudolf Margolius - a fellow survivor and government official - was falsely accused and executed during the anti-Semitic Stalinist Slánský show trials in 1952. Branded a*n enemy of the people*, Kovály's perspective on totalitarianism was honed through double trauma. Her memoir endured a fragmented publication history: first published in exile by Josef Škvorecký's *68 Publishers* in Toronto (*Na vlastní kůži*, 1973), then translated under various titles including *The Victors and the Vanquished* and *Prague Farewell*, before finding its definitive English release in the United States in 1986 and having dozens of editions since. Blocked by communist censorship at home, her insightful text could only reach Czech readers after the Velvet Revolution, with official domestic editions

appearing in 1992 and 2012. (More on Heda Kovaly's influential text below).

This is a house in Blatná where Zdenka Fantlová was born and spent three years of her life, with a public sculpture, a replica of the suitcase she took with her on transport, to honor her life. Photo: Hana Waisserová

**Zdenka Fantlová & Helga Weiss-Hošková: Cultural Resistance and Delayed Witnessing**

For other women writers-survivors, the delay in publication was bound to the passage of time and the slow archival path toward public awareness. Zdenka Fantlová, who survived Terezín (Theresienstadt), Auschwitz, and Bergen-Belsen, became a vital witness to the vibrant musical and theatrical underground maintained by prisoners in the ghetto. After going into exile and living across Sweden, Australia, and the UK, her story was first published in a small Czech edition in 1996 (*To chce klid, řekl tatínek. Klid je síla, řek tatínek*) before gaining widespread attention through its English translations (*My Lucky Star*, 2001, and *The Tin Ring*). Though still largely underappreciated in her Czech homeland, her powerful narrative - which vividly details women's survival strategies in the camps, during death marches and a close call in Bergen-Belsen - inspired dramatic stage adaptations in the UK. Before her death at age 100, Fantlová contributed significantly to major cultural documentations of Holocaust-era art, appearing on international panels, BBC programs, and in documentaries such as *The Music of Terezín*.

Similarly, artist Helga Weiss-Hošková maintained a child's diary and drawings while imprisoned in Terezín (Theresienstadt). Hidden in a wall and completed immediately after the war, these primary artifacts describe her deportation, time in Auschwitz and the Freiberg work plant, and her death-train ride to Mauthausen, where she and her mother miraculously survived until liberation. Though preserved for decades by the Prague Jewish Museum, this powerful Holocaust narrative remained outside the popular literary sphere until an invitation at a London event prompted its translation as an alternative to Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl*. Published globally by Penguin in 2012–2013 as *Helga's Diary: A Young Girl's Account of Life in a Concentration Camp*, the internationally acclaimed work restored a vital primary voice to the young-adult Holocaust canon, with its widespread success even inspiring a subsequent Czech edition.

**Dita Kraus: Reclaiming the Narrative and *A Delayed Life***

The tension between external representation and personal agency is very prominent in the story of Dita Kraus. Kraus's childhood drawings (also known alongside Helga Weiss

Hošková's drawings) from the Terezín camp were preserved in Prague, and her oral testimonies were well known among those interested in Holocaust history, as she was an active witness. However, her story was first brought to global fame by Spanish author Antonio Iturbe in his bestselling novel *The Librarian of Auschwitz* (2012/2017), based on Kraus's time caring for eight smuggled books in the camp's children's block. (Her late husband, Otto B. Kraus, had previously documented their shared history in novels such as *The Children's Block* and *The Painted Wall*, leading Dita to long view herself as the "non-writer" of the family). While appreciative of Iturbe's research, Kraus maintained her premise that *"*no one who wasn't a prisoner in Auschwitz can describe it.*"* Motivated to assert her own agency over her narrative, she assembled her personal English writings - originally intended solely for her descendants - into the 2020 memoir *A Delayed Life* (published by Ebury/Penguin and Macmillan). Unlike the fictionalized account focused tightly on the war, Kraus's self-authored work spans her early childhood in Prague, her imprisonment, her post-liberation life, her marriage to Otto, her life

as an exile, and her career as a *kibbutznik* and later a teacher in Israel. We get to see her develop her personality, her opinions, her attitudes. In doing so, she reclaimed her life story from the realm of dramatic fiction and placed her authentic voice at the center of her legacy.

**Publication Boom and Memory Boom**

The expanding focus on women's experiences and everyday life under the Holocaust marks a major shift in historical perspective, moving beyond traditional testimony toward a broader cultural recovery. Influenced by late 20th-century feminist movements, this evolution challenges conventional gender roles to foster a more complete, empathetic understanding of human resilience and women's specific trials.

This multidisciplinary shift is evident across several fields, such as performative and visual Arts. There have been revivals of works by perished composers, such as Hans Krása's *Brundibár* with a libretto by Adolf Hoffmeister. This opera was performed fifty-five times by children in the Theresienstadt camp (and famously, Zdenka Fantlová performed in it) before most of the cast

and the composer were sent to Auschwitz. However, besides plays and concerts, the visual arts of the witnesses, such as Helga Weissová-Hošková's paintings, are well known beyond the museums. With regional significance, new documentaries and biographies have also been produced, highlighting international personalities like survivor and musician Olga Sommer and harpsichordist Zuzana Růžičková, and oral history and related scholarship have had greater impact.

One important source highlighting agency has been anthologies like Lisa Peschel's *Performing Captivity, Performing Escape: Cabarets and Plays from the Terezín/Theresienstadt Ghetto (2014).* Peschel conducted archival research and worked directly with survivors, their families, and private archives. Her anthology highlights the internal, functional role of performance for the prisoners themselves, reflecting their agency and mental resilience by using comedy and satire of daily ghetto life as a coping mechanism (including a women's fashion show mocking shaved heads, skinny bodies, no underwear or inadequate clothing, which is similarly described in *Franci's War,* even of taking place

in another camp). She highlights the resilience, clinging to cultural continuity as a mode of survival and continuation of pre-war theatrical traditions, clinging to national identity over Jewish one, and claiming artistic identity under extreme conditions in captivity.

These complex dynamics of the lived tension between humor, hope, and the constant threat of transport to extermination camps are much present in all featured literary testimonials. Projects like this complement broad initiatives like the *Memory of Nations* (*Paměť národa*) oral and educational public projects, which coexist alongside the literary testimonials. Finally, projects like these fill historical silences and bridge the gap between the anonymous history, the Czech literary canon, and transnational exile literature, revealing vital, previously overlooked insights.

This is a picture of a dress designed by Franci Rabinek Epstein and her mother, Pepi Rabinek Epstein, for their Salon Weigert in Prague. Photo provided by Helen Epstein, from the collections of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague.

Crucially, delayed Holocaust narratives - such as *Franci's War* -build upon these recent projects and confront complex realities within the camps, like sexual barter within concentration camps. Often a desperate strategy for survival, women exchanged sexual acts with guards or fellow prisoners for food, protection, or favors. Though historically marginalized in mainstream discourse, scholarship increasingly recognizes sexual barter as a critical dimension of the survivor experience (Hájková 2013, 2020, 2021).

Approaching these traumatic, humiliating experiences requires deep sensitivity, honoring the immense courage of those who endured them while acknowledging the many stories that remain untold. Re-evaluating these suppressed narratives remains essential to fully understanding Holocaust history.

The surge in commercial interest and late-20th-century publication demand did not merely reflect a market trend; it fundamentally reshaped how Holocaust survivors, particularly women, exercised historical and narrative agency. Historically, survivor agency was constrained both by societal taboos and a rigid, male-dominated memory culture that prioritized military resistance or martyrdom over the nuanced, everyday strategies of female survival. The eventual publication of memoirs by figures like Kovály, Fantlová, Weiss-Hošková, Kraus, and Rabinek Epstein marked a crucial evolution: these women reclaimed agency by asserting full ownership over their authentic, unfiltered experiences. Rather than conforming to idealized victimhood, their willingness to confront formerly suppressed realities - such as the complex moral grey zones of survival, forced compromises, and

sexual barter - demonstrates an act of profound radical agency. By bringing these raw truths to light, these authors transformed from passive subjects of history into active agents who redefine the parameters of Holocaust memory itself.

**Kovaly: Notes on the Agency of the Influential Text**

Despite her memoir *Under a Cruel Star: A Life in Prague 1941–1968* becoming an international classic, Czech-American author Heda Kováły (1919–2010) remains surprisingly underappreciated in her homeland. Her life encompasses the extreme horrors of 20th-century Europe: surviving Theresienstadt and Auschwitz, escaping a death march, surviving the Holocaust only to join the Communist Party, and later becoming a persecuted widow when her husband, Rudolf Margolius, was executed in a Stalinist show trial. Kováły reveals the disparity in opinions about Communism and helps us understand its impact on society and individuals.

Kováły's account provides an extraordinary lens on how high-minded utopias degenerate into terror, but her narrative stands out particularly for its gendered agency and grounded moral

resistance, as she juxtaposes gendered perspectives in which women's practicality seems to oppose ideology. While many postwar survivors were drawn into the Communist Party seeking to rebuild a broken world, Kovály maintained a sharp, intuitive skepticism that she explicitly links to her identity as a woman. Even though she joined the Party, she -- unlike her husband -- took a skeptical view of Communism from the very beginning: "That I myself did not succumb to the lure of ideology was certainly not because I was smarter than Rudolf but because I was a woman, a being much closer to reality and the basic things of life than he was" (65).

Through this gendered lens - one rooted in everyday survival, family, and direct human experience rather than abstract political theory - she recognized the danger early on. While abstract ideology seduced others, Kovály saw that Communism offered: *"...such clear, simple answers to the most complex questions that I kept feeling there must be a mistake somewhere."* (11). She became suspicious of the glimmers of totalitarianism and foretold the impending dehumanization, which she and her family

experienced at its worst. She summarized it in a call for the rehabilitation and recognition of her executed husband. Kovály urged the Communist officials to understand the full consequences of their acts and to realize how they stigmatized her, transformed her life, and imposed an alien identity on her son, thus altering their lives in the most profound ways. She challenged the sloppy rehabilitation that occurred during the Destalinization era. Exploiting her status as a former persona non grata, she dismantled the totalitarian mock legislatures and principles. When she reported to the Ministry of Justice, she presented the following list:

*Summary of losses suffered by myself and my son due to the arrest and conviction of Dr. Rudolf Margolius:*

*-Loss of Father*

*-Loss of Husband*

*- Loss of Honour*

*- Loss of Health*

*- Loss of Employment and Opportunity to Complete Education*

*-Loss of Faith in the Party and in Justice*

- *Loss of Property.* (174)

In her hearing, she clarified her list: "You murdered my husband. You threw me out of every job I had. You had thrown me out of a hospital! You threw us out of our apartment and into a hovel where, by some miracle, we did not die! You ruined my son's childhood! And now you think you can compensate us for that with a few crowns? That you can buy me off? Keep me quiet?" (175).

Kovály reminded the technocratic Party of the effects of totalitarian practices on individual lives, and she highlighted the impact upon her son, whose childhood and family history had been marked by the high-profile political trial and execution of his father. She challenged the nature of bureaucratic rehabilitation and the credibility of the ruling Communist Party, which could neither be forgiven nor trusted again. Kovály was not merely a passive victim of state-sponsored trauma; she exercised profound agency by confronting the regime on its own terms. When the Communist authorities attempted a bureaucratic, superficial *rehabilitation* of

her executed husband during the Destalinization era, Kovály dismantled their mock justice.

Kovály's bestseller provides numerous exceptional examples of how humanity's best and most high-minded intentions can be perverted into the worst actions that can punish many innocent people, strip them of their potential, waste their human capital, and dehumanize them. Returning as a camp survivor, she summarized her experience that transformed her and allowed her to fall for the illusions and the utopia of Communism (like her husband and many others). She explained that she was becoming one of the survivors who:

> Were too devastated even to stand up for themselves and insist that their former neighbors return stolen apartments, paintings, china, and carpets. Living for the small everyday pleasures - home, family, friends, music, theatre - seemed petty after such loss. To redeem their lost lives, they wanted to sacrifice themselves for a noble effort: creating a perfect future "in which this could never happen again." And so they joined the party. (63)

While Kovály, in a matter-of-fact tone, describes the situation of her return, she also notes the gradual changes that occurred in the general psyche. She repeatedly justifies her decision to join the

Party on the grounds that the war and Nazism had made her suffering normative and that, as a Holocaust survivor, she had been humiliated and felt unwanted.

Kováły's voice serves as a vital historical record, capturing how paternalistic, authoritarian regimes target women and families while enforcing systemic moral decay. She describes the catchy ideology of the Communist Party pamphlets and writings, the Party's problematic personnel, and its paradoxes. As a proud individual, she draws a convincing picture of how national shame, personal humiliation, defeat, deprivation, and perpetual fear can lead even the most thoughtful individuals to abandon their senses for the "simplified perfect." Gradually, she educates herself in Communist common practices, its use of propaganda and lies, the spread of fear, and its preference for loyalty over dignity. She explains the puzzle of her time with and diagnoses the totalitarian mindset: "It seems beyond belief that in Czechoslovakia, after the Communist coup in 1948, people were once again beaten and tortured by the police, that prison camps existed, and we did not

know, and that if anyone had told us the truth, we would have refused to believe it. And yet it happened." (66)

Kovály also notes the permanent toll that totalitarianism [meaning Nazism and Communism] imprinted upon previously innocent people like her: "It is hardly possible for people to live for so many years as slaves in everyday contact with fascists and fascism without becoming somewhat twisted" (28), she writes. Further, Kovály summarizes that the Party promoted mainly "the cowardice, the hypocrisy, the dishonesty, the shabbiness" (169) of life in its jurisdiction.

That such codes of behavior were imposed is noted by Kovály, who observes that adopting silent complicity was easier than voicing dissent: "It is not hard for a totalitarian regime to keep people ignorant... Once you relinquish your freedom for the sake of 'understood necessity,' for Party discipline, for conformity with the regime, for the greatness and glory of the Fatherland, or for any of the substitutes that are so convincingly offered, you cede your claim to the truth." (68)

Kovály is forced to feel that she, as a human being, is an insignificant person among a fearful herd of animals, manipulated by power, ideology, and greed. Moreover, she confirms how sheer terror crushes ordinary social relations, troubles middle-class consciences, and reinforces grand political machinations that crush even wives, mothers, sons, and daughters, and private people like herself for no apparent reason.

**What is Agency in Women's Literature and How Does It Differ from Agency in Holocaust Testimonial Literature?**

Agency is the capacity for an individual to act independently and make free choices, which takes on vastly different meanings in the context of women's literature versus Holocaust literature, known for survivors who were forced to make *choiceless choices* (Langer 1982) amid struggles for survival and struggles for human dignity. While key themes and keywords concerning women's agency may be partially shared and relevant, the context of gendered Holocaust narratives is more complex and fragmented. Finally, agency in the Holocaust may be shaped by the experiences and acquired agency in the pre-Holocaust era, and the

post-holocaust agency may overlap with the “need to speak up about the unspeakable” (Baumel 1999).

The common denominators of agency range from examples of coming-of-age, developing the female voice, reclaiming one’s body, social status, acts of self-determination, quests for autonomy, shifts from being an object of male desire or domestic utility to “becoming a subject” with her own goals within the private or public sphere, political or professional world. These transitions from being silenced by social norms to finding a voice or speaking “the truth” about a particular female experience subvert the silent woman, who rejects the ideal of the passive, selfless woman. Instead, the awakened woman has quests for bodily autonomy, reclaiming agency over reproductive rights, sexuality, and physical presentation. However, under the Holocaust and in its testimonial literature, women’s agency greatly differs, and may be one of the main causes for the much-delayed publications.

While women’s literature often focuses on breaking the silence within patriarchy, the Holocaust literary agency is about “speaking out, verbalizing the unspeakable, about the duty to

speak" (Baumel 1999). While traditional women's literary agency seeks to defy the traditional and conventional roles, under the Holocaust, where all these norms are broken, crushed, twisted, and nonexistent, the agency is demonstrated by sabotage, resisting dehumanization, or by maintaining the sense of humanity. During the Holocaust, women would focus on the fight for survival, and their agency turned into fighting against the erasure of the self, to humanize an inmate without rights. A great example of the shifts and paradoxes in such revelations of agency is in *Franci's War*, where the narrator turns to the 3rd person in Auschwitz, where reality is too dehumanizing to identify with it. Similarly, Rabinek rewrites claiming agency by women, when they are prisoners and workers in a work camp, date and have sexual encounters with Italian POWs, and are ridiculously scolded for "their morality" by their German Nazi supervisor.

In the Holocaust testimonial women's literature, agency is often known to be "limited" or "fragmented," and needs to be approached critically. Lawrence Langer in *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (1991) argues that the extreme conditions

created a “split self” where traditional morality and traditional interpretations do not apply, as those *choiceless choices* concern decisions made between two equally horrific outcomes (e.g., a mother deciding which child to hide), where agency exists but has no moral *good* option. Other known aspects of agency connect to spiritual and intellectual resistance, such as maintaining agency happens through forbidden education, prayer, or forbidden writing (like keeping diaries, producing drawings, such as in *France’s War* or the story of *Helga’s Diary* or keeping forbidden objects as Zdenkla Fantlová keeping her tin ring), playing piano, acting, but also having a nose job to be able to visiting forbidden cinema (*Franci’s War*), putting on black-humor-fashion-show (in Theresienstadt or German work camps), making Christmas theater in a work camp (*Franci’s War*), seeking boyfriends, seeking any way to remain human when the system sought to dehumanize. In the testimonial literature (or oral histories), such agency also happens via small acts of defiance, such as sharing a crust of bread or any tiny sabotage in a labor camp - tiny actions that assert a person is still an active agent, not just a victim.

Another well-known relevant agency much associated with the Holocaust is *bearing witness,* when the act of surviving to tell the story transforms one from a passive victim into an active voice (such as Dita Kraus, who shared many oral histories and finally produced a book published in 2020, though the delay problematizes the authenticity of some of her points). However, even this *bearing witness agency* has not always been fully embraced, as it also informs of the preservation of self, moral compromises, sexual barter, or other unfavorable acts to survive, like having lesbian relations with a female guard, having an abortion, or killing a newborn child.

Specific women's acts of agency and survival strategies connect with maternal agency (much described in most of the delayed narratives), which often reveal agonizing agency of mothers and other women trying to protect pregnant women and children. This is often described as closely coexisting with social net agency, in which women formed small support groups in camps, using relational agency to share resources and emotional support. In Theresienstadt (and in *Helga's Diary,* In *Franci's War,*

and *A Delayed Life*), for example, these groups were mostly formed on the basis of family connections, prior acquaintance, ethnicity, or membership in the same political organization (Hajková 2020). Another agency is connected to the female body as evidence, when bodies in the camps experienced the trauma of forced shaving, amenorrhea (loss of menstruation), sexual violence, or sexual barter (Hájková 2013, 2021). Other known agencies are connected to women's hiding and passing as non-Jews, which was apparently easier for women, as men were circumcised. This allowed women to act as couriers or underground agents.

Scholarship on agency in women's Holocaust literature emerged in the 1980s, rethinking women as victims and describing their agency. Baumel (1999) suggests there are four main models of women's agency in the Holocaust literature. She suggests that women adapted their roles and behaviors to survive, such as stepping up into masculine roles in situations where traditional male leadership was decimated or men were unable to function due to the breakdown of social structures, (such as Franci who claims

that she was an electrician like her father, and was eventually forced to electrify a work camp and serve as a maintenance man clearing latrines, etc.). This also included women becoming the primary breadwinners, negotiators, or protectors of the family. Additionally, women formed alternative female frameworks, which were often new, exclusively female structures that functioned alongside or in competition with male-dominated institutions. This was common in ghettos and resistance movements where women organized their own social aid and survival networks (and is very present in all concerned narratives). Additionally, Baumel observes, in crisis, women adapted and shifted their priorities as the Holocaust forced such a radical shift in societal values and caused the subversion of traditional gender norms to prioritize immediate physical survival over social decorum.

Baumel also suggested the concept of *Schwesternschaft* (sisterhood), which meant mutual assistance, as women frequently formed small, tight-knit groups that acted as surrogate families (unlike men). Those

networks provided emotional and physical support, emotional solace, shared food rations, and protection. These communal bonds were often the deciding factor in whether a woman survived the camps (like Helga, who survived accompanied by her mother, Franci with Kitty in *Franci's War,* and many more examples).

Baumel highlights that women were also an early warning system for their families, because women often interacted with the local community (at markets or in shops), they were frequently the first to notice the shift in public sentiment and the rise of local anti-Semitism. This is apparent in Kovaly*,* who says that her husband was blind to growing antisemitism in postwar Prague due to his gender, which led to his execution in show trials. Despite all these pressures, some women – like Heda Kovály – claim to be more grounded due to their gender, as women tend to privilege experience as a tool of truth. Kovály even thinks that being a woman might explain her healthy skepticism of Communism and similar ideologies as such: "That I myself

did not succumb to the lure of ideology was certainly not because I was smarter than Rudolf but because I was a woman, a being much closer to reality and the basic things of life than he was." (65)

Kovály reckons that her gender gives her more direct experience with reality, allowing her to understand the people around her better than visions and ideologies, which, through her practical and pragmatic lenses, soon prove doubtful to her anyway. She suggests that being a woman in those times helped her to see and address historical truth in all its physical reality and complexity. She observes and describes how people in various roles deal with their consciousness, how totalitarianism affects their value systems, and how various social classes react to power relations in everyday life; she attempts a moral and ethical analysis of the era, recognizes women and the subaltern as heroes; she describes the transformation of multiple identities in herself and others under displacement, isolation, and exile: from a prominent urban youth with high hopes for her future, she turned into an outlaw, prisoner, laborer, eventually Holocaust survivor, returnee,

someone who nearly attempted suicide, widow, wife of a high profile political prisoner, the persecuted enemy of the state, sick patient and finally, an exile from Communist oppression.

Finally, Baumel notes that gender was not just a category of victimization, but a tool for survival. Women adapted traditional skills - like social networking, caretaking, and domestic management - into sophisticated, agency-driven survival tactics. In their narratives, many female authors emphasize that they simply wished for a normal, private life rather than public or political involvement. Kovály recalls, *"All I want is an ordinary, quiet life"* (68), while Weiss-Hošková visually expresses this same desire in a drawing of her future self. However, this desire for private normalcy must be understood alongside the immense tragedy of totalitarianism. Beyond physical torture and mass violence, the regime caused systemic dehumanization, degendering, massive displacement, and enduring psychological trauma for survivors returning to a hostile world.

**Notes on Critical Scholarship on Women's Agency in Holocaust Testimonial Literature**

In “Unheard Testimony, Untold Stories: The Representation of Women’s Holocaust Experiences” (2003), historian Zoë Waxman argues that our understanding of women in the Holocaust has been distorted by preconceived gender roles. While modern scholarship has increasingly focused on women, Waxman argues that historians and the public often *cherry-pick* stories that fit traditional narratives of female behavior - especially those related to nurturing, motherhood, and sisterhood - while ignoring more complex or *unpalatable* truths. I believe that these were also important reasons why certain texts, such as *Franci’s War,* were rejected and published with a significant delay.

Waxman is critical of the *myth of the nurturing heroine*, as she critiques the tendency of scholars to focus almost exclusively on women as caregivers and mothers. While many women did form *surrogate families* and supportive networks in camps, Waxman argues that making this the *universal* female experience ignores the brutal reality of survival. She suggests that by framing women’s survival primarily through *sisterhood,* we risk sentimentalizing a period defined by extreme dehumanization,

which excluded difficult stories, *the untold stories* that do not fit the image of the selfless victim or heterogenous norms (also in Hájkova, discussed below). Waxman points out that some testimonies have often been marginalized or omitted when including or referring to failed motherhood, or cases where they were unable to protect or chose their own lives over their children's. These stories are omitted (despite having agency) if they have internal conflict, hostility, theft, and *self-seeking treachery* within women's groups in the camps.

Additionally, the instances of moral ambiguity, such as actions and experiences of female Jewish *kapos*, who had power over others (or opted for open sexual barter to make their mother of pregnant friend to survive) or women who engaged in behaviors traditionally viewed as *unfeminine* or *immoral,* such as lesbians (Hájková 2025), to stay alive are left out or may lead to delayed publication (see Hájková; or Helen Epstein's "Afterword" of *Franci's War*). Finally, Waxman argues that gender defines and shapes how survivors remember and how we listen. On one hand, she mentions external societal pressure: survivors often felt they

had to frame their stories in ways that were *palatable* for post-war audiences, or interviewers asked certain questions, expecting certain answers.

Overall, she suggests that women faced multiple burdens, having faced unique biological and social traumas (menstruation, sexual violence, pregnancy) that were often deemed too *shameful* or *inappropriate* for early testimonials. Her core message is a call for a non-heterogeneous understanding of the Holocaust. Waxman suggests that by forcing women's experiences into a single, heroic, or maternal mold, we actually strip them of their humanity.

Anna Hájková focuses on the intersection of Jewish and queer history during the Holocaust. Her research, most recently in her 2025 book *People Without History Are Dust: Queer Desire in the Holocaust*, challenges the long-standing absence or erasure of same-sex desire and non-normative gender from the Holocaust narratives. Hájková argues that the historiography of the Holocaust has traditionally operated on a false binary: viewing victims as either *persecuted homosexuals* (often assumed to be non-Jewish) or *Jewish victims* (assumed to be heterosexual). She suggests that

survivors were *doubly marginalized,* being persecuted for their race (as Jews) and being queer. She studies historical records and community memory, which tends to be exclusive and offers only hints, examining contradictions, rumors, homophobia, and even open accounts (like in *Franci's War*). She utilizes the term *queer* rather than strictly *homosexual* to capture the fluidity and complexity of human interactions in extreme conditions. Her research suggests that sexuality in the camps was not always linked to a fixed self-identity, and the term *queer* encompasses a spectrum of behaviors, feelings, and relationships that do not map neatly onto modern LGBTQ+ labels.

Hájková also challenges survivors' homophobia by examining homophobic stances in survivor testimonies and prisoner societies. She notes that gender-conformity and social status influenced whether a community would protect a queer individual. She notes that due to a stigma, there is much erasure of queer stories, and that there has been *lingering homophobia* among fellow survivors who viewed same-sex conduct as immoral,

deviant, and freakish. Finally, she aims to return agency and dignity to historical subjects by dismantling these stigmas.

Her earlier research focuses on sexuality as a survival strategy, especially with sexual barter, which often blurred the *boundaries* between sexual violence, sexual barter, and genuine desire. She explores how sexuality could be used as a means of survival, noting that in the prisoner society, sexual autonomy was often a marker of status, reserved for functionaries (like Kapos), and that enforced relationships between prisoners and guards illustrate the complex power dynamics involved.

Additionally, in her 2025 research, Laura Miñano-Mañero redefines silence not as a passive failure of narrative, but as an active, deliberate form of agency through which Holocaust survivors reclaim control over their testimonies. Rather than signaling disempowerment, choosing when to remain silent allows women to protect their dignity, establish boundaries, and navigate the ineffable weight of sexual violence and specific vulnerabilities - such as sexual humiliation, rapes or other dehumanizing bodily experiences - often excluded from the narratives. She suggests that

silence serves as a powerful communicative strategy that, alongside embodied non-verbal cues like long pauses, breathing shifts, and body language, forces the listener to confront the living, physical presence of trauma when words alone fall short. Alongside Hájková, she argues that oral histories recorded on video or audio capture more than just words; they are also worth complementing with published testimonials (if applicable).

**Precarious Pathos and Ethos of Testimonial Literature**

While testimonial literature offers an invaluable window into the human experience, its reliability is often complicated by the inherent limitations of memory, personal bias, and the pressure of social expectations, and all narratives need to be taken with a pinch of salt or an open mind. Narrators may consciously or unconsciously distort facts through exaggeration or omission to align with specific agendas or cultural narratives. For instance, Dita Kraus exemplifies this instability of memory when publishing her text in her advanced age by repeatedly stating, "*I can't remember,*" and mentions "*I might not have remembered things correctly*", and her narrative and oral histories may not always

match. Thus, providing oral histories that do not always align with her written narratives creates a discrepancy further exacerbated by the potential for editorial intervention to alter original intent. This selective recall is often driven by a desire to downplay uncomfortable truths.

An interesting example of truth, *blurry boundaries, complex moralities or lingering homophobia* is seen in various accounts of Helene Sommer (born Věra Fuchsová), a Czech Jewish woman from Prague who survived the Holocaust and was known to the historians from numerous narratives. Among others, she is also referred to as *Sylva* in Franci Rabinek Epstein's memoir, *Franci's War*. Sommer was deported to Theresienstadt, then to the Theresienstadt Family Camp at Auschwitz, and later transferred to subcamps in Hamburg and Bergen-Belsen. She served as a block elder. Survivors remembered her as striking, beautiful, and charismatic. In the memoir, Epstein describes how a female SS guard - later identified in records as Anneliese Kohlmann - became infatuated with Sylva. Epstein notes that the guard visited Sylva's quarters late at night and left at dawn, giving her small favors and

protection. While Franci, a liberal and educated woman, describes Sylva's bisexual encounters without moralizing, other accounts tend to dismiss her or moralize on her.

Hájkova's research argues that lack of external verification makes all those individual testimonies difficult to corroborate, and it is not easy to grasp instances of same-sex intimacy or "sexual barter" during the Holocaust in their complexity. While she brings attention to the methodologies and ethics of interpreting and researching sexual relationships in concentration camps, she suggests a multi-perspective approach: by integrating *microhistorical methods*, one can also observe other clues, including nonverbal cues like silences and lags, and work with cross-referencing sources [like *Franci's War* plus other accounts], one can better assess credibility. Ultimately, by allowing written testimonies to complement oral histories - such as when Kraus details the smuggling of the *Brundibár* manuscript - researchers can bridge the gap between factual chronologies and the emotional truth of social bonds, power dynamics, and the role of the literary testimonial.

**Conclusion**: **Holocaust Women's Testimonials Navigate Complicity, Moral Ambiguity, and Diversify the Literature and Memory**

Overall, these testimonial narratives by women reveal that communities under totalitarianism can be seen as organic systems permanently subjected to change due to ideological shifts in the political climate (such as periods of "frosting" or "melting"). For example, Weiss Hošková and Kovály describe transforming conditions in concentration camps (Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, Freiberg, Mauthausen) resulting from shifts in personnel, location, and historical events. These narratives challenge a monolithic understanding of regimes as well as social or ethnic groups, allowing for an understanding of totalitarian systems from a marginal perspective as women highlight personal and regional issues. Grand historical moments are illustrated through individual lives, personal observations, and general social attitudes. By focusing on daily life, relationships, and implicit coping mechanisms, these authors bridge the private and public spheres, reclaiming historical agency by proving that the minutiae of daily

survival were as significant as macro-political events. By retaining narrative control - whereas early Holocaust accounts often flattened women's experiences or left them silent - they demonstrate that women were not passive victims. The eventual publication boom provided a platform where women could dictate their own terms, controlling how their trauma and resilience were remembered. Finally, these narratives redefine survival strategies beyond physical resistance or moral purity; by documenting taboo subjects like sexual barter (as explored by Hájková), these memoirs expand “agency” to include desperate, nuanced choices made under extreme coercion within the “grey zone.”

By narrating their own personal histories, these women biographers challenge dominant versions of regional memory. Although concerned with past traumatic experiences, they present fresh, nuanced accounts of a diverse national memory that avoid focusing solely on major historical figures or events. Through first-hand encounters with Nazism and Communism, they offer deep insights into human nature. However, subjective memory is constructed through remembering and forgetting alike, as well as

through privileging, neglecting, or suppressing accounts of certain lives. Eyewitness authors - frequently relocated to Western diasporas - often comment on political manipulations and react to nationalist memory dictates imposed by Communist authorities. Thus, women's representations break the monolithic collective memory that often perseveres in Central and Eastern Europe. For instance, while the prevailing Soviet cult privileged monumental hero narratives and demonized Nazism, it simultaneously erased much of Jewish and Holocaust memory unless subsumed into anti-Fascist discourse.

Foremost among the challenges to the Central and Eastern European reception of these narratives were regional knowledge production, embedded social predispositions, and cultural manipulations. Crucially, women's totalitarian narratives have suffered significant publication delays, both globally and in their homelands. Even though key historical shifts - such as Destalinization, political meltdowns, and the eventual fall of the Iron Curtain - created political openings, these texts were long overlooked or suppressed. In the post-communist mainstream and

gender-blind literary landscape (including problematic dissident production), the contested identities of writers like Kovály, Fantlová, Weiss-Hošková, and Franci Rabinek Epstein did not fit prevailing public expectations, while official women writers were often reduced to cultural derivatives of state ideology. Furthermore, Cold War discourse isolated feminist projections across both camps, surrounding both totalitarian and democratic systems with patriarchal myths that disregarded Western feminists while overlooking women of the East.

Despite these prolonged publication delays, these authors exercised profound authorial agency. Rather than acting as passive witnesses to trauma, these exiled writers actively transformed persecution into instruments of resistance, self-definition, and healing. Navigating new foreign audiences, cultural frameworks, and conscious linguistic choices between Czech and English, they employed disarming humor, uncritical nostalgia, and critical self-scrutiny to dismantle persistent myths surrounding the female experience without falling into sentimental artifice. Franci Rabinek Epstein's *Franci's War* stands as a paramount example of this

resistance to sanctification. Epstein actively dismantles the myth of the "selfless victim" by detailing moral ambiguity, non-normative behaviors, and pragmatic survival choices - including open sexuality, complex power dynamics surrounding female functionaries like Kapos, and queer desires under extreme conditions. As Anna Hájková highlights, traditional survivor society and post-war historiography operated on a heteronormative binary that erased these non-normative gender dynamics under extreme conditions.

This agency manifests not through idealized martyrdom, but through an unapologetic refusal to conform to palatable post-war gender expectations - a stark contrast to a historiography long distorted by sentimentalized narratives of selfless motherhood and nurturing. Unfiltered accounts of moral ambiguity directly caused the decades-long delay in publishing texts like Epstein's. Ultimately, recognizing and publishing these delayed testimonials in their homelands exposes the multiplicity of historical truth, challenging historical oversights and recalibrating scholarly understandings of gender, trauma, and exile.

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## Emmanuel Levinas

*Peter Hudis*

Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), a widely influential Jewish philosopher, was born in 1906 in Kaunas, Lithuania. He immigrated to France in 1923, took up the study of philosophy, and became influenced by Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology. In 1929, when barely 24 years old, he published the first book-length study of Husserl in French. He also became enthralled with the work of Martin Heidegger, whose pathbreaking work *Being and Time* sent shockwaves through European philosophy. The gravest shock, however, was when Heidegger joined the Nazi party in 1933, openly promoted Nazism, and subjected many of his Jewish colleagues (including Husserl himself) to persecution. The shock hardly lessened by 1940, when Levinas (now a French citizen and military officer) was captured and imprisoned in a forced labor camp for Jewish prisoners.

Though he avoided deportation to Germany, that was not the case with his parents and brothers, who perished in the Shoah - an event that evoked not a word of criticism or remorse on the part of Heidegger from then to the end of his life.

Levinas's response to the Holocaust largely defines the terrain of his subsequent thought. But he did so in a particular way, by arguing (often in direct contrast to Heidegger's phenomenological ontology) that "philosophy cannot not be an ethics" (Levinas, 1999, p. 97). Throughout his evolving body of work, Levinas argued against the tendency to reduce the Other to a reflection of an absorbing or constituting consciousness by first of all distinguishing between two concepts of truth.

Much of Western thought has treated truth as the identity between phenomena and a comprehending consciousness that reduces "the Same to all that is opposed to it as Other" (Levinas, 1993, p. 91). Truth is viewed in terms of the conquest or consumption of exteriority and otherness in the name of "freedom" and "autonomy." The distinctiveness of the Other, its heteronomy, gets flattened out and neutralized in the pursuit of apodictic self-

certainty. In contrast, Levinas argues, “in the truth, a thinker maintains a relationship with a reality distinct from him, other than him - 'absolutely other’” (Levinas, 1993, pp. 88-89). A journey of discovery that returns us to the point from where we began after having absorbed the world into itself - the motif that haunts Western consciousness from Homer’s *Odyssey* to Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Sprit* - allows for no irreducible gap between the self and the Other.

The problem with such standpoints is that they remove the ground for ethical obligation. If all that is separate from me can eventually be reintegrated into myself in a higher totality, wherein lies the *compulsion* to respond to the obligations posed by others who overflow my ideas and even my life? Wherein lies the compulsion to take responsibility for those outside my circle of friends, family, religion and nationality? People are rarely diffident about addressing the needs of those like themselves; but what about those who are not, who are *absolutely* other? Is not the Holocaust the ultimate expression of the refusal to posit a particularism free from all that interferes with its universalism? To

live a truly ethical life we must put aside the temptation to treat every obstacle as something to be surmounted and eventually integrated into our orbit of experience. This poses a sharp challenge to prevailing notions of freedom and autonomy, but it does not entail a rejection of the idea of freedom itself.

Freedom is not possible without some kind of separation, without a tear or a rupture in the fabric of the totality. In lieu of such a separation it is hardly possible to contemplate and *engage* the marvel of lived life. Levinas suggests that Western thought grows impatient with the very separation that gives rise to it and seeks to reintegrate the separate elements into a higher synthesis. By reducing otherness to what can be absorbed and appropriated by a comprehending consciousness, much of Western thought leaves us without access to that which inevitably escapes our grasp - that which is "infinite," the Other. And what escapes our grasp in thought is often forcefully annulled in life, as the history of colonialism, imperialism, racism, and their accompanying genocides suggest.

Levinas's challenge to the egology that characterizes modernity involves recovering "the heteronomous relationship with an unknown God" (Levinas, 1993, p. 96). God is not "known." God *reveals*. God in the Judaic tradition is *unknown*. The gravest crimes are justified in the name of a *known* God. The infinite, the idea of God, escapes any effort at self-appropriation. But that does not mean the infinite exerts no determinant pull on the life of humanity, as is shown by the persistence of the idea of an infinite, unknowable God in human history. The fact that the idea of an infinite being cannot be made transparent to the knowing self does not render it superfluous. Levinas is not simply, or even primarily, providing the basis of a religious exegesis: his point is that the other *person* can no more be reduced to a moment of our self-awareness than can the idea of God. The Other confronts us from across a divide that is not exhausted by our efforts to define or appropriate her. The Other is in this sense "infinite." The Other comes to us from "on high," as a gift or as a threat, but never as a result of our grasping and self-awareness.

The Other maintains itself in distinction from our subjectivity; she is *irreducible*, and in this sense, *divine*.

Levinas develops these insights through a decades-long engagement with René Descartes's *Mediations on First Philosophy*, which he considered among the five most important works in the history of philosophy. This may be counter-intuitive: is not Descartes' introspective *meditation* on the self as the ground for veridical knowledge the very opposite the "I-Thou" relation that Levinas and Martin Buber take as their point of departure? It is important to recall, however, that Descartes's discourse on the self as a "thinking thing" raises the question of how a finite being can have thought of the *infinite*. The latter is not constituted by the knowing subject; it is *a priori*. From where does this innate idea derive? Not from the knowing self, but from that which is itself infinite. Descartes identifies the latter with God, whereas Levinas identifies it with the relation between the self and the interminable obligations posed by the presence of the other *person*. It is not without reason that Levinas objected to defining his work in

religious terms, even though the terms of religious (and especially Judaic) discourse frames much of his thinking.

The *cogito* necessarily maintains a relationship with the *infinite*. But what is the nature of this relationship? The infinite overflows any effort to comprehend it, seize it, conceptualize it. It does not *derive* from our freedom of thought. How then can we know what is finite, and hence imperfect, unless there is an infinite power that "comes to humanity"? *This infinite power is the face of the other*. Herein lies the great intellectual revolution inaugurated by Levinas: the most mundane phenomenon of everyday life - the presence of a face, the most exposed and vulnerable part of the body - is not only the source of our consciousness of others but of the discovery that our obligation to them is *inexhaustible*. There is simply no excuse not to save the lives of the damned:

> When we look at the face of the Other we know that we are commanded to honor the alterity of the other by recognizing an asymmetry between us. We also know that something has "happened" in the intersubjective "space" between us which transcends any knowledge we may have of it. But far from gaining an objective knowledge of God's purpose, we feel a deepened sense of responsibility, the weight of the other's suffering, an enhanced sense of the other's creatureliness. We do not interpret what we feel as

> belonging to a teleological nexus but as bearing a moral imperative. (Wyschogrod, 2005, p. 362)

Levinas's "philosophy of the face" does not immediately translate into political action, although it has influenced numerous political theorists, including Frantz Fanon and Enrique Dussel. But it did lead Levinas to conclude that Heidegger, his initial philosophic mentor, "*in the end* does not escape from the totalitarian and egological tendencies of the Western tradition" (Peperzak, 1993, p. 16). It was not alone the Shoah - and Heidegger's silence about it - that led Levinas to embark on a new path in thought. He wrote, "The circumstances of Marxism having turned into Stalinism is the greatest offense to the cause of the human, because Marxism bore the hopes of humanity: it may be the one of the greatest psychological shocks for the twentieth-century European" (Levinas, 1999, p. 107). It is a shock humanity is still trying to recover from.

Levinas did not despair of humanity, nor did he proclaim "the end of man"-unlike many of his later interlocutors in French philosophy. He stated, "But in the decay of human relations, in that

sociological misery, goodness persists. In the relation of one person to another person, goodness is possible…it is a goodness beyond all systems, all religions, all social organizations. Gratuitous, that goodness is eternal (Levinas, 1999, pp. 107-9).

And as he argued in *Totality and Infinity*, his greatest philosophic work, "Freedom consists in knowing that freedom is in peril" (Levinas, 1969, p. 35). Human freedom has perhaps never been more in peril than it is today, which makes the thought of Levinas of such enduring value.

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**Unit Sixteen: Conclusion and Reparations**

## The Importance of Studying the Holocaust

*Wendy Adelé-Marie*

The persecution of the Jews and others was known in 1933. Over a decade later, in 1944, Henry Morgenthau, then Secretary of the Treasury, wrote a report to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt about what had been happening to the Jews and others in Nazi occupied Europe. In it, Morgenthau noted that

> One of the greatest crimes in history, the slaughter of the Jewish people in Europe, is continuing unabated. This Government has for a long time maintained that its policy is to work out programs to save those Jews and other persecuted minorities of Europe who could be saved. You are probably not as familiar as I with the utter failure of certain officials in our State Department, who are charged with actually carrying out this policy, to take any effective action to prevent the extermination of the Jews in German-controlled Europe. (Morgenthau, 1944)

Morgenthau (1943) further stated that the general public did not know of the 1943 documents that showed how the U.S. State Department stalled on negotiating for the rescue of Jews. The World Jewish Congress attempted to negotiate with the U.S. State Department and other agencies to rescue Jews from France and Romania, citing specific information about other mass murders of

the Jews. Morgenthau (1944) lamented at the inaction of the government to intervene, but when finally, there was an agreement, Morgenthau cited that the British government was in disagreement about how to handle the rescue of Jews. Morgenthau wrote: “in simple terms, the British were apparently prepared to accept the probable death of thousands of Jews in enemy territory because of “the difficulties of disposing of any considerable number of Jews should they be rescued” Morgenthau (1944). He also alluded to the fact that the U.S. State Department’s Breckinridge Long about-face when it came to Jewish matters was perhaps to absolve his guilt towards not allowing more Jews to migrate safely to the U.S. In 1944, millions were already dead.

In the second part of his report to the president, Morgenthau (1944) titled it SUPRESSION OF FACTS REGARDING HITLER’S EXTERMINATION OF JEWS IN EUROPE, and he specifically cited an earlier reports and cables that specifically stated the “many thousands of Jews in Eastern Europe were being slaughtered pursuant to a policy embarked upon the German Government for the complete extermination of

the Jews in Europe" (Morgenthau, 1944). Morgenthau (1944) then asserted that the murder of the Jews was accelerating, and that in 1942, the world governments knew about the Holocaust. He ends his report with these words:

> Judging from the almost complete failure of the State Department to achieve any results, the strong suspicion must be that they are not few. This much is certain, however. The matter of rescuing the Jews from extermination is a trust too great to remain in the hands of men who are indifferent, callous, and perhaps even hostile. The task is filled with difficulties. Only a fervent will to accomplish, backed by persistent and untiring effort can succeed where time is so precious. (Morgenthau, 1944)

However, the goal was to win the war then rescue, a conclusion drawn from this and other documents from the time. By the time liberation of the camps began on 23 June 1944, when the Soviets had liberated Majdanek, it was too late for action when the war in the west was being waged hard. Auschwitz was liberated on 27 January 1945, and other liberations followed.

Nazi Germany surrendered on 8 May 1945. Between 1933 and 1945, the enormity of the crimes perpetrated against humanity, war crimes, and crimes against the peace came out in war crimes trials, conducted by the Allies and then within

individual countries. The hunt for the perpetrators is still underway, even though these individuals are elderly.

Holocaust education is vital, given the current global climate, especially in the United States. Genocide occurs when "governments pass laws allowing legal racism to become a part of mainstream norms; the public accepts these actions because of the use of propaganda and terror. Consequently, genocide arises because of ignorance, and acceptance or silence of the populace" (Adelé-Marie, 2009). Attacks against marginalized groups and peoples have not ended. Holocaust education is vital in the 21st century, since "with xenophobia, antisemitism, and racism on the rise, there is a pressing need for Holocaust education in schools. Such history lessons, taught by competent teachers, could be an effective antidote to all these ugly ills" (Kirshner, 2020, para. 12). Therefore, education empowers and provides a framework of prevention and is a weapon against hate.

In 2020, Representative Carolyn Maloney authored H.R. 943, the Never Again Education Act. The U.S. House then passed a law to "allocate $10 million in federal funding over five years to

further Holocaust education" (Maloney, 2020, para. 7). This bill cements the rationale for mission, vision, and goals of this text. Education combats antisemitism, hate, and racism, as "Holocaust education provides a context in which to learn about the danger of what can happen when hate goes unchallenged and when there is indifference to the oppression of others" (Maloney, 2020, para. 4). Bullying can lead to hate, and hate can lead to rage, violence, murder, and even genocide. Together, we have a responsibility to work towards preventing ignorance, that leads to hate, racism, antisemitism, and anti-immigrant prejudices.

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Here, in conclusion, we end with a critical submission on reparations.

## History of Reparations Agreements and the Role of Social Services Agencies

*Adam Yunis*

Reparations from governments that participated in the Holocaust consists of an evolving process of restitution for survivors. *Wiedergutmachung* is the German word for an agreement made in 1953 by the German government to pay the direct Jewish survivors for their loss of family, livelihood and the crimes committed directly against them. Since these original payments, several other funds have been created for survivors. The German government has handed over most reparations' claims to the Claims Conference, a Jewish organization which provides direct reparations payments and funding to social welfare organizations around the world. This essay will trace the decision to accept reparations in the 1950s, later developments with the Claims Conference and will finish with an explanation of the role social services agencies have in the restitution process.

## History of Reparations Agreements and the Role of Social Services Agencies

Restitution means to make whole again. After the Second World War there was nothing Germany could do to ever restore European Jewry, and the future relationship between Jews and Germany remained a polarizing issue in both communities. Reparations being made available to Jewish survivors shortly after the Second World War was an important step for German society to acknowledge their crimes and attempt to financially compensate the survivors of the crimes of National Socialism. From the vantage point of 2021, the fact that Germany would compensate hundreds of thousands of Jewish survivors since 1953 is generally taken for granted. Among Jews, the decision to accept German funds was fiercely debated and had an enormous impact on Israeli society.

The issue was controversial in West Germany as well, with large portions of the population feeling little guilt towards the Jews, or if they did, felt their current circumstances in immediate post war Germany should be the priority, not dwelling on the past.

Eventually the agreement was a major step in normalizing relations between Israel and West Germany and created an important model for compensating victims of state violence. Payments to survivors meant for many an important step in rebuilding their lives. An acknowledgment of suffering is one of the most important roles reparation payments can play in a survivor's life, and the funds are a lifeline for many survivors.

The expansion of criteria for eligibility as time went on also was an important step in recognizing survivors who suffered persecution but never received compensation because their persecution did not meet the original requirements of German law. This essay will trace the decision to accept reparations from Germany, the creation of the Claims Conference and BEG laws from West Germany, later developments with the Claims Conference, and will finish with an overview of the important role social services agencies play helping in the reparations process.

**Decision to Accept Reparations**

Reparations from Germany to the Jewish people had already been discussed during the Second World War and the issue

by the end of the war was in the hands of the 4 Allied governments that had gained power over a defeated Germany: the US, USSR, UK, and France (Rosensaft, 2001). Offices were set up for future restitution claims in various administrative zones, but no new major developments came on the issue until March 1951, when Israeli foreign minister Moshe Sharett submitted a note to the 4 Allied governments claiming a recompense of $1.5 billion to the State of Israel from the German Federal Republic (Rosensaft, 2001). The number was based on the cost of resettling 500,000 Jewish victims in Israel, at $3,000 per person.

In their replies to Israel's claim, the three Western Allies declined to take any action, the U.S. and UK noting that they would not "impose" upon the FRG (West Germany) the debt of reparations payments to Israel (Rosensaft, 2001). The implication being that if Israel wanted reparations, they would have to deal directly with the FRG (Rosensaft, 2001). On September 27, 1951, West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer gave a speech to his government that stated his government was ready to compensate

Israel and representatives of Diaspora Jewry for reparations (Henry, 2002).

What followed this announcement, which would be a crucial moment in German history, was the creation of the Claims Conference in New York, a collection of 23 major Jewish national and international organizations, with each member agency designating two members to the Board (Henry, 2002). The Claims Conference had the task of negotiating with the German government a program of indemnification for the material damages to Jewish individuals and to the Jewish people caused by Germany through the Holocaust. The organizations on the Claims Conference Board have remained almost entirely the same to this day. The Claims Conference continues this role today and has been negotiating new funds for survivors throughout the decades. In its opening statement, the Claims Conference delegation gave support for the claims of their future negotiating partner, the young state of Israel (Claims Conference Publications, 2021). Important for distinction is that the Israeli claims bore no relationship to the

Jewish material losses that the Claims Conference would administer.

The Claims Conference pursued compensation for individual victims for damages resulting from Nazi persecution, and a "global payment" for relief and rehabilitation of Nazi victims (Rosensaft, 2001). The Claims Conference demands came with a strong caveat. "We are ready to negotiate on certain claims of a material nature. But we want to make clear from the beginning that there can be no negotiation on moral claims" (Henry, 2002). Public debate on the issue of reparations from Germany to Israel remains one of the fiercest in Israeli history.

Supporting reparations on the basis to sustain Israel's economy was Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel. In a telling statement to the members of the central committee of his Mapai party, he claimed that there are two approaches on the matter. "One is the Ghetto Jew's approach and other is of an independent people. I don't want to run after a German and spit in his face. I don't want to run after anybody. I want to sit here and build here. I'm not going to America to take

part in a vigil against Adenauer (West German Chancellor)" (Sharett, 2011). This view of "Ghetto Jews" would remain a negative stereotype in Israeli post-war society and speaks to the divide between settlers and recent immigrants present in the country. One of the main figures vehemently opposed to the agreement was Menachem Begin, head of the Jewish nationalist party, Herut, precursor to the Likud, who also held personal animosity for Ben-Gurion (Sharett, 2011). This was not just a personal grudge but stemmed from the *Altalena Affair*, a confrontation between the IDF and Begin-led Irgun forces in 1948 which resulted in more than a dozen dead.

Debate in the Knesset on the issue of an agreement with Germany began in early January of 1952, immediately Begin called for organized demonstrations in the streets against an Israeli-West German agreement (Sharett, 2011). Inside the Knesset, socialists and right-wing deputies attacked the idea of cooperating with West Germany, protesting the agreement on various grounds. In January of 1952, riots broke out as some 15,000 demonstrators gathered outside the Knesset, some hurled

stones and the police used tear gas to disperse the crowd (Rosensaft, 2001). Begin and Ben-Gurion exchanged insults during debate in the Knesset and Begin was suspended for three months for his “unruly behavior” (Rosensaft, 2001). In the end, the Ben-Gurion government narrowly obtained Knesset endorsement of direct Israeli-German negotiations by a vote of sixty to fifty-one, with five abstentions and four members absent (Sharett, 2011).

Segments of the Jewish population viewed the payments as blood money and did not want to enter any negotiation with the Germans (National Library of Israel. 2021). The scale and importance of the issue is remarkable, as the historical context involved so many emotional and political issues during the first years of a new nation. Central to the critique of an Israeli-West German agreement was that a nation should not create economic ties with a government that not only 6 years before was murdering Jews up until the liberation of the camps, and had almost destroyed European Jewry (Sharett, 2011). To accept money and financial compensation for the Holocaust, by definition, reparations does enter the realm of monetizing suffering, and who would receive

that compensation was an important question that Israeli society faced only 6 years after the Holocaust.

The matter was so sensitive that Israeli state authorities relied on a little used Hebrew term, *shilumim*, which stresses payment and avoids describing the nature of the payment (National Library of Israel, 2021). From the perspective of those approving of negotiations, Jewish assets in Europe had been looted, and the young Jewish state was struggling economically, relying heavily on foreign investment and lacking infrastructure. In the world we have built, monetary compensation is generally our only way of legal compensation for wrongs done against an individual and a community, this the basis of civil judgments in our American legal system. Israel would be receiving large scale financial compensation for the Holocaust, and the degree to which Israel was a representative of the whole of the Jewish people was *fiercely* debated, as it still is today, though beyond the scope of this essay. In contrast, payments directly to survivors were supported by those opposed to Israel making an economic agreement with Germany (Sharett, 2011). This view resulted from a concern among

politicians on the right and left over the Ben-Gurion government making an agreement with West Germany, even though it did not normalize relations, this came in 1965.

A very different political and social situation existed in the early 1950s in Israel, and understanding the various political ideologies and factions is crucial for studying the debate around accepting a reparations agreement with West Germany in 1952. The short period of time since the Holocaust, the shock experienced by the Jewish public as its existence was realized, and the signs of Germany's quick rebound aroused understandable apprehension in Israeli society.

> Who are you going to demand the assets from? I shall bring a simple example: Simon set fire to the house of Ruben's father and Ruben's father died in the raging flames. What does Ruben do? He might give up the house where his father burned to death. He might go to court and appoint himself a prosecutor in a civil lawsuit and demand that he should be compensated for the value of the house. But in what untamed tribe will you witness the son of the murdered person demand the value of the house from the murderer? But in your view, the orphans who lost their parents go directly to the murderer. Not to demand "ransom" as you say, but supposedly to receive the value of the homes in which your parents were burned to death. In what uncivilized tribe can you witness such a disgusting act? What are you wishing to turn the People of Israel into – people who nurtured and taught culture for 4,000 years?"

(excerpt of speech given to Knesset on January 7, 1952 by Menachem Begin)

As evidence of the militant opposition to the agreement, the actions of Menachem Begin and other Jewish nationalist actions during this time are telling.

The speech above is one of the many Begin gave in his impassioned denouncement of negotiations to members of the Knesset during debate (Sharett, 2011). In March of 1952, one year after the Israeli note to the 4 Allied powers, a bomb addressed to West German Chancellor Adenauer was detected, killing a disposal expert and injuring two others (Sharett, 2011). French detectives arrested five Israelis in Paris, all of whom were linked to the Zionist group Irgun Tsvai Leumi, of which Begin had many ties (Sharett, 2011).

Adenauer did not want the incident to derail the negotiations between the Claims Conference and Israel and dismissed the acts to “madmen” (Sharett, 2011). One of the conspirators, Elieser Sundit, implicated Menachem Begin in the plot in a memoir written shortly after the former Prime Minister

passed away in 1992. He was summoned by Begin to his Tel Aviv home (during this time Begin was politically isolated, and increasingly impulsive), and claimed that Begin supported something being done against Adenauer and reparations (Sharett, 2011). Sudit remarked in an interview with Haaretz in 2006, “We thought the Germans should pay directly to the survivors of the Holocaust and that the government of Israel should not take the money from them in the name of the Jewish people and buy tractors with it for the kibbutzim” (Harding, 2006). The political unrest of this time is one reflection of the trauma the Holocaust had on Jewish life. Varying political responses resulted from its aftermath, and these came into conflict during the Israeli debate on reparations.

**BEG and Expansion**

In the end, even with the protests, the Knesset approved pursuit of reparations with West Germany, and an agreement was made between the 3 parties involved to provide financial restitution to Jewish victims, signed on September 10, 1952, in Luxembourg. Under the agreement in 1953, West Germany agreed

to pay a total of $845 million: $100 million earmarked for allocation by the Claims Conference and the remainder to Israel (Rosensaft, 2001). Direct compensation distributed by the Claims Conference to individuals would be paid in annual installments over a period of 14 years (between April 1, 1953, and March 31, 1966). This form of compensation was referred to by the German government as *Wiedergutmachung* [making good again]; however, the Claims Conference did not accept this term, and the program is known as BEG, shorthand for *Bundesentschädigungsgesetz*, the West German laws covering compensation for Holocaust survivors. The money to Israel was split - 30 percent was to pay for Israel's crude oil purchases in the United Kingdom and with the balance of 70 percent, Israel was to buy ferrous and nonferrous metals, steel, chemical, industrial, and agricultural products from Germany (Honig, 1954). The agreement with West Germany had an enormous impact on the Israeli economy and helped build the infrastructure of the young Jewish state.

The agreement made between Israel, the Claims Conference and West Germany was a historic event as it

recognized that governments should attempt to right their historical wrongs in the form of financial compensation. All three entities that signed the agreement did not exist during the war, reflective of the large changes to world politics that occurred directly after the Holocaust. Survivors now began their process of applying and being evaluated for their individual compensation under BEG. The Claims Conference also began distributing funds to Jewish communities and agencies across Europe and the world, with a goal of helping rebuild Jewish life. Hundreds of thousands of individual claims were submitted between the 1950s and 60s (Rosensaft, 2001).

Compensation was not uniform, and there were anomalies in which victims who endured the same persecution received widely disparate treatment under the German laws. Compensation depended on prewar citizenship, the location and duration of incarceration, the extent and nature of the damages suffered, and assorted other criteria, including where the survivor lived after the war (Henry, 2002). The Claims Conference continued to negotiate with Germany for compensation for individual victims after the

three indemnification laws had been enacted. The last deadline for applying to BEG was in 1969. It is believed there were serious deficiencies in West Germany's indemnification laws, which originally were limited to certain Nazi victims who were in the West by October 1953. Scores of thousands of victims were subsequently able to flee from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in the post war decades (Claims Conference Publications, 2021).

Beginning in 1975, the Claims Conference began negotiating for compensation for survivors who were refugees from Soviet Bloc countries, including efforts to extend the BEG deadline (Claims Conference Publications, 2021). Finally, in 1980 the Conference reached an agreement with West Germany for the creation of the Hardship Fund, which provided one-time payments to victims, primarily from Eastern Europe, who arrived in the West after the BEG deadline. After the fall of the Soviet Union, survivors in the FSU also received compensation through further negotiations between the Claims Conference and Germany, resulting in the Central and Eastern European Fund (CEEF). The

Claims Conference has approved over 33,000 Holocaust survivors for this type of payment (Claims Conference Publications, 2021). For those survivors residing in the West, the Claims Conference has approved approximately 495,983 Jewish victims of Nazi persecution for payment from the Hardship Fund, approximately 1.5$ billion (Claims Conference Publications, 2021). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the German Government and Claims Conference negotiated for an additional 2,200 Euro to be paid to all Hardship Fund recipients, with distribution to be split into payments in 2021 and 2022.

In 1990, seeking to compensate those survivors who hid, were in a ghetto, or in a concentration camp who did not receive BEG, the Claims Conference negotiated with the German government for a new fund, the Article II fund. This agreement resulted from the unification of Germany, furthering the Claims Conference pursuit of compensation for survivors of the Holocaust who had received little or no indemnification (Claims Conference Publications, 2021). East Germany did not enter into any reparations' agreements during its existence. Under Article II, a

unified Germany agreed to establish a fund for victims who had received little or no compensation previously, meaning BEG recipients would not be eligible.

The "Article II Fund" is still administered by the Claims Conference and provides monthly pensions of €580 (as of most recent negotiations for 2021). Applicants must meet the eligibility elements of Article 2, which has certain time restrictions and criteria related to type of persecution. The income of the applicant is also considered as one of many factors determining eligibility. Unlike B.E.G. pensions, it did not provide for cost-of-living adjustments, and all recipients receive the same amount. The Claims Conference has approved over 100,000 Holocaust survivors for payment from this fund and has paid a total of approximately 4.9 billion dollars total to survivors throughout its existence (Claims Conference, 2021).

**The Role of Social Services Agencies**

Since its founding, the Claims Conference has worked with Jewish Social Services agencies to distribute services and financial help to Holocaust survivors. One of these institutions is

Holocaust Community Services (HCS) in Chicago, which is a program of the Jewish United Fund and is administered under CJE SeniorLife, a larger elder care organization. The Claims Conference provides Social Welfare funds for survivors in 47 countries through partnerships with local social service organizations. Social Welfare funds are distinct from persecution-based reparations, social welfare funds are awarded to social services agencies to provide services to a survivor community. The Claims Conference annually and meticulously negotiates with German government on the amount of Social Welfare funds awarded to agencies.

HCS serves over 1,900 Holocaust Survivors living in Illinois with financial, functional and psychosocial assistance. Beyond conducting comprehensive assessments to determine need for financial assistance for food, medication, and homecare, HCS also helps with one-time emergency needs, transportation, and provides support groups, wellness classes, social events, education and professional training, and restitution and reparations assistance. During evaluations, care managers take down a

persecution history of new clients, review their compensation, and then work with the survivor and their family to evaluate options for potentially eligible funds, and compile their story, and help file claims or appeals. Many survivors were children during the war, so help in researching the conditions of place and time is extremely important when memories and documentation are lacking.

Most of the clients Holocaust Community Services serve receive reparations from one of the two funds administrated by the Claims Conference. As outlined above, the Article 2 fund, agreed to in 1990, was designated for survivors who were in camps, ghettos, living in hiding or under false identity, while the Hardship Fund, agreed to in 1980, is for those survivors who fled, hid or suffered other persecution by the Nazis. The Child Survivor Fund, negotiated in 2015, is also administered by Claims Conference and provides an additional one-time compensation to those who were children during the war (defined as being born in 1928 or later) and suffered similar persecution as required for approval by the Article 2 Fund. HCS also aids in the application process and handling of funds directly administered by the German Government, but not

through Claims Conference. These pension programs include a "ghetto work pension" called ZRBG, a slave labor fund (negotiated in 2000 in order to indemnify German corporations such as BMW for their use of slave labor) and management of ongoing BEG pensions. When negotiations result in the expansion of criteria, it is the role of social services agencies to reach out and inform the community of survivors and help coordinate the application and approval process.

There are compensation and pension programs not under control of the Claims Conference or the German government. Pension programs and Holocaust reparations programs offered by other European states to survivors living abroad only developed after most of the survivors had passed away, many of the changes happening within the past decade. A complete summary of these programs is out of scope for this paper but there has been a great disparity in how non-German, (including Austrian) countries have compensated victims of the Holocaust. This has been especially true for victims living abroad, most of whom were not German but whose only recourse for compensation for their suffering during

the Holocaust was through the German government or the Claims Conference and their negotiations.

Recent compensation opportunities have also often had a limited time window for application. In 2015, after years of failed attempts by survivors living in United States to sue the French state railway SNCF, the French government agreed to a 60$ million fund, available to direct family members, spouses or children of victims who had been transported to their deaths on SNCF trains (BBC, 2014). The SNCF was in the middle of bidding on U.S. rail contracts during this time, and the agreement indemnified the SNCF from further legal claims by U.S. survivors (BBC, 2014). The program offered comparably large sums of direct payments, successful applicants receiving approximately 100,000$, and was only open for application for 2 years. In 2018, the Claims Conference negotiated a one-time payment of 200$ to be paid to Jewish victims who lived under the Romanian regime between 1937-1944, the window for applications closed in November of 2019 (Claims Conference Publications, 2021). As evidenced, the compensation offered to Jewish victims varies

highly, and although the past two decades have seen an increase in compensation programs offered by European countries, it is important to remember that most of the survivors who suffered persecution by collaborating forces or local populations had already passed away before these were offered.

HCS staff has experience working with these various others restitution programs offered by a European state that a survivor may be eligible for. When the Claims Conference-Romanian Fund was announced in 2018 it was the job of social services agencies like HCS to help identify survivors and facilitate the application process. Poland has a war pension program titled "The Legislation on War Veterans and Victims of War and Post-War Oppression", and many HCS clients have applied and been approved for this pension in the past 6 years. This program was only made available to Polish survivors without a Polish bank account in March of 2014 and provides a monthly pension for Jews and non-Jews who were detained in either a ghetto, camp, prison; or were forcibly deported to the Soviet Union; or had served in the Polish military (WRJO, 2015).

To receive approval from the Claims Conference or any European government, there are requirements in the type and length of persecution. Many survivors had various experiences during the war, some qualifying for Article 2 or Hardship Fund or another compensation program, while other experiences that were just as harrowing for the survivor, do not. Survivors also might perceive, remember, and tell their stories in a different manner, not recognizing what details could be important. An example of this is helping a survivor apply to the ZRBG (Ghetto Work Pension), meant to compensate those who performed "voluntary" work in the ghetto, thus contributing to the German economy. For Jewish survivors, the thought of any work being done during the Holocaust as voluntary can be difficult to grasp, and the definition of what constates "work" for eligibility is highly fraught. Survivors had a myriad of experiences during the war , but with knowing the right questions to ask, HCS can consistently act as advocates for our clients.

Reparations' requirements are further complicated by the fact that borders and allegiances changed throughout the period

of 1938-1945, and this can later impact reparation fund eligibility from various countries. HCS staff with a knowledge of the complex history of the Holocaust geographic and Nazi occupation timelines can evaluate a survivor's story, identify what funds they could apply to and perform research and inquiries on more complex cases. Dealing with European governments can be difficult for the survivors, and HCS acts as an advocate in their pursuit of reparations, limiting the contact a survivor must have with the Claims Conference or German government, while still relentlessly working with them in the application and approval process.

To demonstrate the impact reparations payments can have for a survivor, the history that reparations can help revive, and the nuances involved in the application process, a case study is helpful. Director of Holocaust Community Services, Yonit Hoffman, wrote an account of Shika Kuperman's Holocaust experience for *Chicago Jewish News* in 2018, the following is information obtained from her research and writing. Shika Kuperman was born in New York in 1916 to recent immigrants from Ukraine, his

parents moved back to Ukraine shortly after his birth partly due to his mother's political beliefs and the call of revolution. They moved back to Dunayetsky, which was established as a Shtetl in the 16th century and later was known as a hub of Jewish and Zionist literary scholars and collective farming.

Shika met his wife Anna in Kiev, where he was studying in trade school, they moved back to Dunayetsky shortly before the Nazi invasion. Shika was working as a blacksmith when the Nazis came to Dunayevtsky and he was immediately drafted in the Red Army to defend the Soviet Union. The Germans occupied Dunayevetsky in summer of 1941. Shika's parents, siblings, and his wife Anna were forcibly moved there. During the three-year occupation, the Nazis carried out public hangings and mass executions of the Jews. A witness interviewed by Yahad-In Unum (Father Patrick Desbois' organization) described one of these executions: "The Germans gathered 700 Jews. They took them into the mine where the water rose until their knees. Afterwards, the entrance was exploded, and Jews were suffocated inside." In fact, records show that on May 8, 1942, nearly 2,300 Jews were buried

alive in those phosphate mines. This history is crucial for understanding how the Nazis immediately implemented a variety of ways of killing during the deadliest phase of the Holocaust in 1942.

Anna, Shika's wife survived but his parents, siblings, and their families died there. Shika only learned about this tragedy when he returned to his native Dunayevtsy in search of his family. His military battalion was surrounded by Nazis, and except for a few people who managed to get out, everyone was killed. Shika, escaped and knew how to survive in the woods. He was on his own for about a month, and then he was able to walk and crawl to Dunayevtsy to meet with his wife, Anna, in the ghetto.

The local Jews and the Jews from neighboring villages had been herded into an area fenced with barbed wire that stretched from the market square to a pond. Those leaving the ghetto were either going to work or headed to their deaths. Jews worked long days with the threat of cruelty and death ever present. The work being voluntary in that Shika on his own initiative presented himself to work to the occupying forces. Anyone who

paused to catch a breath, stumbled or sat down was lashed or was shot on the spot. While working, some Ukrainians secretly passed food through the barbed wire fence. Workers carried stones from town to town, building German military outposts and Aryan settler structures. Again, by studying the work Shika was doing, we gain insight into the policies of the Nazis for Ukraine, which was to be colonized by Aryans after the Nazi project of the Holocaust.
His work thus allows us to see how the Holocaust in Ukraine was motivated not only by racial hatred, but also due to the Nazi plans for a new Europe.

One of these projects involved the installation of a waterwheel, connected to power a pump and a fountain so that the *Gebietskommissar* - the head of administration of the Dunayevtsy district - exhausted after the daily executions, could enjoy his quiet evenings of meditation. In late October 1942, Shika and his wife appeared at the home of Iosif and Anna Gavelskiy, non-Jewish family friends. They told the Gaveslkiys how they had escaped when, yet another group of Jews was taken to death pits. They hid initially in an attic, but every night Shika would go down and help

build a small hiding place in a barn. Shika and his wife spent 18 months hidden there. They were liberated on March 26, 1944.

In the spring of 2018, more than 75 years after his life was forever disrupted and changed, he received compensation for his suffering, specifically the work done under brutal conditions in and outside the ghetto. The work Shika had done in the ghetto had been correctly identified by HCS as qualifying for the "Ghetto Work Pension" who reached out to William Marks, Esq, a reparations expert who helped navigate a claim with the German courts. He was awarded a significant sum of back pay and monthly compensation. Shika was 105 years old. Shortly after reaching these two milestones, Shika passed away. Shika's story reflects the broad range of harrowing circumstances and atrocities Jews in the Soviet Union were subjected to and contributes to our understanding of the variety of methods which Germany, along with local collaborators, used to murder Jews in Ukraine. By continuing to pursue reparations for victims of the Holocaust, we are allowed to actively participate in commemorating the lost and to gain recognition for the suffering of the survivors.

We also gain valuable eyewitness testimony to the Holocaust in areas such as the Soviet Union, lesser known or memorialized, which documents death and survival – and is an important and crucial task for Holocaust memory for Soviet Jewry. By pursuing a small bit of justice for the victims of the Shoah, we also call attention to details of the implementation of the Holocaust that are generally less known to the public. The pain survivors had in their lives, knowing how their loved ones were murdered, and of their own struggle in survival, is something societies around the globe must never forget. The pursuit of reparations for survivors plays an important role in documenting the evidence of the Holocaust and in ensuring recognition and some modicum of justice for elderly Holocaust survivors. Social services agencies that serve Holocaust survivors will continue in their role as advocates for survivors, and in partnership with the Claims Conference, can help ensure that survivors live their last years with the dignity they deserve.

**Partial List of Current Claims Conference Funds Available to Survivors**

***Article 2 Fund***

Limited to Jewish Nazi victims who were persecuted as Jews and who meet the following eligibility criteria: were incarcerated in a concentration camp* or labor battalion during specific time periods as defined by the German Ministry of Finance on its website; or were imprisoned for at least 3 months in a ghetto as defined by the German Ministry of Finance; or Were imprisoned for at least 3 months in certain “open ghettos” as defined by the German Ministry of Finance; or were in hiding for at least 4 months, under inhumane conditions, without access to the outside world in German Nazi-occupied territory or Nazi satellite states (Nazi instigation); or Lived illegally under false identity or with false papers for at least 4 months under inhumane conditions in German Nazi-occupied territory or Nazi satellite states (Nazi instigation); or were a fetus during the time that their mother suffered persecution as described above.

***Hardship Fund***

Eligibility under the Hardship Fund is limited to Jewish Nazi victims who were persecuted as Jews and who meet the

following eligibility criteria: Suffered deprivation of liberty (such as, ghetto, forced labor, camp, hiding or false identity); or Fled from the Nazi regime; or Fled between June 22, 1941 and January 27, 1944 from areas of the Soviet Union that were generally up to 100 kilometers from the most easterly advance of the German army (Wehrmacht) but were not later occupied by the Nazis; or Stayed in Leningrad at some time between September 1941 and January 1944 or if they fled from there during this period; or Suffered "restriction of liberty" as defined by the German Government, (such as were forced to wear the Star of David); or were restricted in movement, like lived under curfew, suffered compulsory registration with limitation of residence, (e.g. résidence forcée), etc; or Suffered during the relevant period Nazi persecution in Algeria such as loss of education, loss of property or economic, professional and social restrictions; or were a fetus at the time that their mother suffered persecution described above.

***Child Survivor Fund***

Same eligibility as Article 2, additional payment to survivors born after January 1, 1928.

If you know of a Holocaust survivor who might be eligible for any fund listed here or has not received any type of compensation, please feel free to contact me.

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“You’d be surprised how much you want to live.” Magda Brown

**Special Assessments**

*Echoes & Reflections (by special permission)*

**The Poisonous Mushroom**

1. Consider what Randall Bytwerk, Professor Emeritus, Calvin University discovered what the Nazi reaction was to The Poisonous Mushroom. Notably, he discovered that in 1938, Joseph Goebbels said of Julius Streicher, the Gauleiter of Franconia, an area in Germany, and the man who published the horrific the Stormer, a vile antisemitic periodical, that "has published a new children's book. Terrible stuff. Why does the *Führer* put up with it?" What does this statement reveal about the Nazi reaction to their own propaganda? Consider the reaction from Joseph Goebbels, the Reich Minister of Propaganda, a vile anti-Semite who bore responsibility for the Holocaust. Why did he react the way that he did towards *The Poisonous Mushroom*?

*Stephani Richards-Wilson (by special permission)*

**The White Rose**

2. The White Rose students had no formal authority or positional power. How do you think they mastered their fear to confront evil?

What can we learn from them? How can we honor them and safeguard their story?

3. The White Rose circle remained true to their convictions. How do you think they empowered themselves? What do you do to remain steadfast to your values and ideals?

4. How do you follow your conscience? What gives you courage?

5. The White Rose students weren't bystanders and intervened on behalf of others. What are some ways we can express solidarity and compassion with others in today's world?

**Suggestions for Further Research**

Here are resources recommended for additional research. Sometimes, denial websites mask as legitimate websites; please do not hesitate to reach to your professor for clarification on websites.

1. **The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM)** has a search function for Holocaust-related research: https://collections.ushmm.org/search/
2. **Holocaust Education and Archive Research Team (HEART)** has tremendous resources: http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/toc.html
3. **The International Institute for Holocaust Research** through Yad Vashem is internationally renowned for its research and information: https://www.yadvashem.org/research.html
4. **Holocaust Memorial Center** in Michigan has a database of valuable sites: https://www.holocaustcenter.org/visit/library-archive/web-resources/
5. **Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center** (IHMEC) is based in Skokie, IL., and is a critical resource for our community: https://www.ilholocaustmuseum.org
6. **Holocaust Educational Foundation at Northwestern University** is an invaluable resource and start with this page: https://hef.northwestern.edu/resources/index.html
7. **Echoes & Reflections** is a very important resource and a contributor to this text. Visit the site for lesson plans to videos and much more: https://echoesandreflections.org/

**Postscript by Ellie Pearlman**

## Understanding the past is key to changing the future: why Holocaust education matters

*Ellie Pearlman*

The following focuses on why studying and remembering the Holocaust and other genocides is of dire importance. Understanding the past is key to changing the future. Education is key to this process. We must acknowledge, examine, and grow from our past mistakes to not see such atrocities again. Yom Kippur, the Jewish New Year, is the time when Jews acknowledge the year's shortcomings and ask for forgiveness. We recall our ancestors during a memorial service called Yizkor (Hebrew for "remember"), during which we bring light into the world by lighting a candle or turning on a Yahrzeit light (memorial lightbulb) which sits on our synagogue's walls, our way of bringing our family members' light back into our world. We ask God to remember those who are no longer with us, whether executed or departed. When we recite Yizkor, we renew and strengthen the connection between our loved ones and us. Regardless of if my family was decimated during the Holocaust or

escaped the violence of antisemitism, we are all connected and afflicted by the millions of Jews and other marginalized groups that perished during the Holocaust.

Holocaust and genocide education goes far beyond learning the historical significance of affection. Holocaust and genocide education leads to an intersectional understanding of ethics and the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping. It can be used as a platform to encourage tolerance of diversity in a pluralistic society and for nurturing and protecting democratic values and institutions. The lessons derived from the Holocaust and other past genocides are worth studying and understanding to reflect on and connect to our present critically. Knowledge is our call to action. Knowledge is the most powerful tool to build a world where everyone can feel free and comfortable to exist, be free, safe, and comfortable to *live*.

A long-held tradition among Jews is the hectic banter, furious debate, and questioning of everything. Teachers function as question provokers, truth-seekers, and advocates of justice. They can recognize how justice in one community is a threat to justice in

every community. We have a civic responsibility to educate ourselves and our children about the Holocaust and the many other horrible genocides that have taken place throughout our history. We must acknowledge them, examine them, and discuss them. History is doomed to be repeated if new generations are not encouraged to learn it.

The concept of Yizkor and remembrance is so deeply embedded in the Jewish culture that it manifests in many ways. When Yizkor is said, all of a synagogue's Yahrzeit lights are lit. I remember skipping down the long hallway of my temple many times, all of the Yahrzeit lights glimmering on the walls around me like fireflies. The lights symbolize the souls of my ancestors, reminding me that even when we are gone, the generations to follow will never forget. Similarly, this is why Holocaust and genocide education matters. Education will serve as a reminder and a lesson of the universal consequences of naked prejudice and unchecked hate. If education and remembrance are abandoned, history is sure to repeat itself. We must forgive but never forget.

**About the Author and Editor**

**Wendy Adelé-Marie** is a Distinguished Professor of History at Oakton College. She has a Ph.D. from the University of the Cumberlands, an M.A. in History/Holocaust Studies from Roosevelt University, a B.A. in History from Roosevelt University, and an A.A. from Harper College, where she majored in German. Adele-Marie also holds a Graduate Certificate in Diversity, Social Justice, and Inclusion from the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, and a certificate in Effective College Instruction from ACUE (Association of College and University Educators) co-endorsed by the American Council on Education, and a certificate in Social and Behavioral Research from CITI. She is also a member of the Advisory Board, Center for New Deal Studies, at Roosevelt University, Chicago.

Author of *Women as Nazis: Female Perpetrators of the Holocaust*, Adele-Marie has also written many essays, chapters, and book reviews, including several essays on figures such as Eleanor Roosevelt and Adolf Hitler for the *Encyclopedia of World War* II and the essay "Rise of Hitler and National Socialist Party: Critical Overview" for the *Encyclopedia of the Documentary Film* as well as two instructional modules for Roosevelt University. Adele-Marie, who holds certification in human rights consulting from the U.S. Institute of Diplomacy and Human Rights, was also the editor of the series *Annual Editions: United States Histor*y. Adele-Marie has designed and developed courses and main LMS shells, including ones for American History, Native American History, Introduction to African American and Black American History, History of the Holocaust, History of Genocide, Women in Western and Non-Western Civilizations, and History of Nazi Germany.

Adele-Marie's research interests center on Nazism and include topics such as genocide, the analysis of Nazi constructs of images of women, and the sociological and psychological factors that led to women perpetrating the Holocaust. She also studies the Second World War, representations of Americans in 20th-century popular

culture, social reforms, the progressive movement, and women's leadership and representation in early modern Europe.

Adele-Marie was the 2026 recipient of the Outstanding eLearning Educator Award from the Instructional Technology Council. A Woman of Influence Award recipient from Roosevelt University, Adele-Marie was a Fellow for Northwestern University's Annual Summer Institute on the Holocaust, is a two-time awardee of the TLEP award from Oakton College, and was the 2026 recipient of Oakton College's High Impact Practice Award.

Nationally certified as a human rights consultant by USIDHR, the U.S. Institute of Diplomacy and Human Rights, Washington, D.C., her third book considers the Axis, gender, and public policy during the Second World War, and her essay "After Nazism: Exile, Memory, and Postwar Self-Fashioning Narratives of Women Perpetrators" will be in a special edition of the Taylor & Francis imprint *Feminist Modernist Studies*.

**About the Contributors**

**Yvonne Aronson** attended the University of Illinois and is a volunteer for the speaker's bureau for the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center. A mother of three, grandmother and great-grandmother, Yvonne has spoken to many audiences about her miraculous story of survival.

**Sherry Bard** is a senior trainer for the Echoes & Reflections program. Over a period of nearly two decades, she held several roles at USC Shoah Foundation, including Education Programs Project Director. During that time, she was appointed to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's Education committee for a period of six years. Today, she is also an education consultant for The Rodgers Center for Holocaust Education at Chapman University, which hosts an annual Holocaust Art & Writing Contest. She is the daughter of a Holocaust survivor from Grójec, Poland, and lives in Los Angeles, California, with her husband.

**Nora Bergman** joined CJE in 2018 as a Program Manager. In this position, she oversees HCS program operations, writes and reports on grants, manages the program budget, and supervises the HCS administrative team. Her other responsibilities within HCS including overseeing program operations, grant writing and reporting, managing the program budget, and supervising the administrative team. She also provides case management for English-speaking clients. Nora received her master's degree in social work from the University of Chicago's School of Social Services Administration.

**Daniel Patrick Brown** is a professor emeritus from Moorpark College (CA). He has authored numerous historical works, including *The Beautiful Beast: The Life & Crimes of SS-Aufseherin Irma Grese* (2004), *The Camp Women: The Female Auxiliaries Who Assisted the SS in Running the Nazi Concentration Camp System* (2002) and *Enduring Entanglements: The Third Reich's Insidious Impact on America* (2019). He has also served as an interviewer for the "Survivors of the *Shoah* Visual History Project."

**Danny M. Cohen**, Ph.D., is the author of the novel *Train* and the choose-your-own-pathway mystery *The 19th Window*. The founder of the nonprofit Unsilence, he is a Distinguished Professor of Instruction at the School of Education and Social Policy at Northwestern University.

**Rabbi Michael Davis** enjoys studying Arabic at Oakton. He is a Seminary professor and a nationally known public speaker on the Holocaust, worker justice and equal rights in Israel-Palestine. He has spoken at the Illinois Holocaust Museum, McGill University (Montreal), Drew University (New Jersey), DePaul University (Chicago), New Orleans City Council, Rotary Club (Milwaukee), MAS-ICNA (national Islamic conference), American Islamic College (Chicago), Holy Name Cathedral (Chicago). He was featured in the Chicago Art Institute Interfaith installation. Rabbi Davis is an independent clergy in the Chicago area. He works primarily with Jews who are unaffiliated with synagogues offering

lifecycle services including funerals and weddings. He can be reached at: mdavis@rabbimichaeldavis.com

**Susan Eischeid**, Ph.D., is a performer and teacher specializing in music of the Holocaust. To date, she has interviewed over 65 survivors of the Holocaust and recorded their stories. Eischeid has also presented dozens of recitals and lectures about music and musicians of the Holocaust period across the United States and in Europe. She is currently Professor of Music at Valdosta State University. Eischeid has recently completed a biography of Maria Mandl, the highest-ranking female SS auxiliary officer at Auschwitz-Birkenau. In 2016 she published *The Truth about Fania Fénelon and the Women's Orchestra of Auschwitz-Birkenau* (Palgrave Macmillan) at the instigation of the surviving members of that orchestra.

Eischeid has also published a biographical article about Holocaust musician Kurt Michaelis, whose oboe is on display at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. She has provided the liner and program notes for several other albums and concerts and, in 2010, founded the *Pink Triangle Project,* a series of events commemorating the LGBTQ victims of the Holocaust. As a performer, she has recorded and released an album of Holocaust music, *Mystic Chords of Genocide*, through the ACA Digital label.

**Sarah Gawo** is an Assyrian-American, and second-generation college student. A former student at Oakton, she is currently a junior at University of Illinois at Chicago. She is majoring in History.

**Chelsea Halling-Nye** is a Program Coordinator for Education Initiatives in the Levine Institute for Holocaust Education. She provides logistical assistance for various educator programs and supports financial and data tracking within the initiatives. Chelsea holds a BA in Sociology from Utah State University and an MA in American Studies from the George Washington University. Prior to working at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, she served as the Program Associate for Strategic Enrollment

Initiatives at GWU and worked as a Legislative Correspondent for the United States Senate.

**Nathan Harpaz**, Ph.D., is an art historian and a museum professional. He earned degrees in Psychology and Art History from Tel Aviv University and a doctoral degree in Interdisciplinary Studies from Union Institute & University, Cincinnati, OH. He is a former art museum director in Tel Aviv, Israel and the author of the book *Zionist Architecture and Town Planning: The Building of Tel Aviv 1919 – 1929* (Purdue University Press, 2013). Other publications include "Jewish Artists and the Perception of the Crucifixion," in *Teaching the Historical Jesus: Issues and Exegesis* (Routledge 2015) and "Artists' Perception of the Last Supper and the Passover Seder" in *The Annotated Passover Haggadah* (The Global Center for Religious Research Press, 2021). Dr. Harpaz is currently the head of the Koehnline Museum of Art at Oakton College where he also teaches art history, Jewish art and museum studies.

**Meredith Hudson** is a student at Oakton who is also pursuing a Master's degree in History after a career of over fifteen years in Early Childhood Education teaching and administration. Meredith has presented her research most recently at Oakton's 2026 Historical Examinations of Women in Western Civilization during the Second World War and Beyond virtual conference.

**Yonit Hoffman**, Ph.D., has served as the Director of Holocaust Community Services (HCS) since 2014. She oversees all program development and service provision for nearly 2,000 Holocaust survivors, supervises clinical, care management and administrative staff, and provides direct services and support groups for survivors and their families. She has served as a key facilitator in establishing community partnerships to build resources and capacity to support survivors. Dr. Hoffman has conducted numerous national and community education and trainings for professionals, lay leaders and caregivers on person-centered, trauma-informed care and the special needs of aging Holocaust survivors.

Dr. Hoffman received her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Case Western Reserve University, and her prior clinical work centered on trauma, loss and under-served populations in Ohio, New York, New Jersey, and Illinois. Her clinical research included studies on resilience and identity in Holocaust survivors and their descendants, which she has presented and published both nationally and internationally. Dr. Hoffman is a second and third generation descendant of Holocaust survivors and victims.

**Peter Hudis**, Ph.D., is Professor of Humanities and Philosophy at Oakton Collegeand author of *Marx's Concept of the Alternative to Capitalism* (Brill, 2012) and *Frantz Fanon: Philosopher of the Barricades* (Pluto Press, 2015). He co-edited *The Power of Negativity: Selected Writings on the Dialectic in Hegel and Marx, by Raya Dunayevskaya*, *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, and *The Letters of Rosa Luxem*burg. He is General Editor of *The Complete Works of Luxemburg*, a forthcoming 17-volume collection; he has edited Volume I (*Economic Writings 1*) and co-edited Volumes II (*Economic Writings 2*), III *Political Writings I*) and IV (*Political Writings 2*).

**Ameen Khan** is currently a student at DePaul University. Before transferring to DePaul, he began his post-secondary education at Oakton College. During his time at Oakton, he took a variety of different courses that allowed him to get a better understanding of the world through different perspectives. After his first year at Oakton College, he was admitted into the Honors program at the institution. One of the first honors courses that he took at Oakton College was *History of the Holocaust*. In Ameen's own words: "this Holocaust course was, without a doubt, my favorite and one that I will never forget. It was during this course that I was introduced to Philip Drell, a man from my neighborhood, who was a great photographer and liberator. His photographs tell the profound story of life in Dachau during the Holocaust. In 2019, I had the honor and privilege of presenting a memorial exhibit on Philip Drell at Oakton College."

**Yousuf Ali Khan** is a student at Oakton pursuing an associate in arts degree, with plans to transfer into a four-year university in the future. Yousuf excels in his courses with a current 3.8 GPA and has a keen interest in history of all sorts, as well as modern day politics.

**Heather Klain** was the Reparations Coordinator and Administrative Coordinator at Holocaust Community Services. She joined the HCS team full-time in 2016 after serving a year as an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer with us. Among many other responsibilities, Heather trains HCS volunteers who serve in many roles, such as making Friendly Visits and Calls, to providing assistance at events and with office work. She has also screened and assisted over 250 Holocaust survivors and families to obtain reparations benefits and/or program services as needed and has become the program's resident expert in reparations and restitution benefits. After earning a bachelor's degree in psychology and sociology from Northern Illinois University, she narrowed her focus from genocide prevention work to Holocaust scholarship, education, and survivor services.

**Phyllis Lassner**, Ph.D., is Professor Emerita at Northwestern University. Her publications include studies of interwar, World War II, and postwar women writers, including two books on the Anglo-Irish writer Elizabeth Bowen, *British Women Writers of World War II*, *Colonial Strangers: Women Writing the End of the British Empire*, and *Anglo-Jewish Women Writing the Holocaust*. She co-edited the volumes *Antisemitism and Philosemitism in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries* and *Rumer Godden: International and Intermodern Storyteller* as well as *The Palgrave Handbook of Holocaust Literature and Culture* (2020).

Her most recent book is *Espionage and Exile: Fascism and Anti-Fascism in British Spy Fiction and Film*. She was the recipient of the International Diamond Jubilee Fellowship 2015–2017 at Southampton University, UK. She also co-edited the new edition of Gisella Perl's memoir, *I Was a Doctor in Auschwitz*. Her current publications include essays on Polish post-Holocaust film, Josef

Herman's art of Holocaust lamentation, and Trudi Kanter's escape memoir. She serves on the Space Between Advisory Committee and the Education and Exhibition Committees of the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center.

**Deborah Leonard** was born in a Displaced Persons Camp in the aftermath of World War II. She came to the US in October 1951 and grew up on the north side of Chicago. She attended the University of Illinois where she earned a B.A. and M.A. and where she taught Communications for several years before transitioning to corporate America in sales, marketing and product development. Her successful career included major roles in large companies with iconic brands like Thermos and Sara Lee. With the Holocaust Survivor Community both aging and dwindling, the children of survivors are obligated to continue to tell their parents' stories. Deborah, whose parents both survived the Holocaust considers this a sacred obligation.

**Maria Anna Mariani**, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor of Italian Literature at the University of Chicago. She is the author of the scholarly books *Primo Levi e Anna Frank* (Carocci 2018), and *Sull'autobiografia contemporanea* (Carocci 2012). She also published the fictionalized reportages *Voci da Uber* (Mucchi 2019) and *Dalla Corea del Sud* (Exòrma 2017).

**Emily Minerof** is a junior at the University of Wisconsin-Madison studying Communication Sciences and Disorders. After college, she plans to further her education in speech pathology/audiology or become a physician's assistant. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she attended Oakton College. At Oakton, Emily found a deep interest in learning more about the Holocaust as well as the history of Nazi Germany. Emily grew up with her older sister, Elaina, who has Rett Syndrome, which inspired her to pursue a path of service and healthcare. Her interests include disability advocacy, awareness, and inclusion.

**Olivia Montecchi** graduated with the honors scholar designation from Oakton College in May 2026 with an Associate in Arts degree. In 2026, Olivia is starting the accelerated Bachelor/Master program at Northeastern Illinois University as a Biology major and Biomathematics minor. Olivia likes learning about child development, psychology, and history.

**Brian D. Naimola** was a Doctoral Candidate at the University of the Cumberlands, pursuing a Ph.D. in Leadership. He has over 25 years of experience in working with the Military. Brian earned his Master of Management degree from Walsh College and a Bachelor of Science degree from Michigan State University. He also received an Executive Leadership Certificate from Cornell University and a Strategic Decision Certificate from Stanford University. Naimola proofread this entire text and assisted Adelé-Marie and Yunis with editing and suggestions for improvement.

**Ellie Pearlman**, M.A., is an Education Associate at the Zekelman Holocaust Center in Farmington Hills, Michigan, where she develops educational programming, conducts guided tours, and contributes to archival and interpretive projects. She earned her Master of Arts in Holocaust and Genocide Studies from Gratz College, where her thesis focused on intergenerational trauma transmission among Holocaust survivor families. She also holds a B.A. in Women and Gender Studies from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and an A.A. in Education from Oakton College. Pearlman contributed several chapters to the textbook, including “Nazi Women” and “Nazi Genocide: Medical Experimentation” as well as an important postscript on why Holocaust education matters. Pearlman assisted Dr. Adelé-Marie throughout the editing process for the Second Edition, offering suggestions, assisting with the updated Table of Contents, and editing the index. She extends her sincere gratitude to her mentor and friend, Dr. Wendy Adelé-Marie, whose guidance, encouragement, and unwavering support have profoundly shaped her academic and professional journey.

**Ralph Rehbock** used to teach classes at Oakton. Among his many qualifications, he holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Engineering from Northwestern University. He is currently the first vice president and executive committee member of the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center in Skokie, Illinois.

**Stephani Richards-Wilson**, Ph.D., Ed.D., was a Professor of Business and Management and the MBA faculty director at Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She was recently promoted to full professor and then retired to devote her time to White Rose studies and Willi Graf's cause for sainthood. Richards-Wilson holds a doctorate in Leadership Studies from the University of San Diego and a Ph.D. in German from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her first dissertation dealt with the benefits of an MBA degree and her second focused on Willi Graf of the Nazi resistance group called the White Rose.

She explored the role of *Bildung* in Graf's decision to resist the National Socialists. (The German word *Bildung* does not have a direct translation. It means self-cultivation or self-improvement through cultural activities such a reading poetry and literature, attending refined activities such as classical music concerts, and participating in the fine arts.) For more information about her work and research related to Willi Graf (1918-1943), please see her academic profile on Academia.edu https://alverno.academia.edu/StephaniRichardsWilson

**Felicity Rivas** is a student at Oakton College, currently transferring to Northwestern University to study data science with a focus in public health. She works as a Certified Nursing Assistant in skilled care. She first read the abstract for this project when Dr. Adelé-Marie shared it with her, and she thought the topic was compelling right away. When later asked to help with the cover, Felicity saw the vision in the initial design and worked to align it with the goals and ideas Dr. Adelé-Marie had in mind, which enabled her to put together a cover for the book.

**Jacqueline Sancen** is a student at Oakton College pursuing studies in Biological Sciences. She earned a concentration in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) in May 2026 and completed Oakton College's Jewish Studies concentration coursework in 2025, receiving Recognition of Excellence in Jewish Studies. A first-generation non-traditional college student, she has received several academic honors, including the Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus Foundation (ILLCF) *Soy El Futuro* Scholarship for 2025-2026 and the Conference of Women Legislators (C.O.W.L.) *W.I.S.E.* Scholarship. Jacqueline's research interests include immigration history, public health, social justice, and Holocaust studies.

In 2025, she was invited by Dr. Wendy Adelé-Marie to contribute a research paper to the Third Edition of *The History of the Holocaust: A Guide for the Community College Student.* Outside the classroom, she volunteers at the Griffin Museum of Science and Industry, and Jacqueline plans to continue her education in the sciences at the University of Illinois Chicago while remaining active in historical and social justice research.

**Stella Sokolovskaya** was born in the former Soviet Union during World War II, but before Germans invaded country. My mom fled from the city just one week before Germans occupied it. But my grandma, aunt and a cousin could not flee and were killed in Drobitsy Yar (ravine) which is on outskirts of the city of Kharkov (now Ukraine). It was mass grave for about 16000 Jews. After victory over Germany, we came to Kharkov, but big part of family perished on the fronts of the war, including my father. Life in the Soviet Union was hard and humiliating for me as a Jew. So, when Gorbachev opened "gates" for Jews to leave, I did it. I came to the United States in 1989.

In 2009, Yakov Zakon and me created task force “Evidence of Holocaust,” which in 2010 became an Association. Together with the newspaper *Reklama* we issued three bilingual (English/Russian) albums, or books, including *In Memoriam of the Victims of the Holocaust*. These albums tell stories about not well

known in the west, which was the Holocaust on the territories of the former Soviet Union. When Yakov learned about book by Professor Adelé-Marie and contacted her, we became friends. Since then, Professor Adelé-Marie invited us to conduct lessons in her class and to the Oakton community about the Holocaust in the former Soviet Union.

**Leon Stein**, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus of History at Roosevelt University, is a pioneer in Holocaust education. Stein was a history professor at Roosevelt from 1966-2006 and served for many years as chair of the department of history. An expert on modern European history, Stein was the first Mansfield Professor of Social Justice Studies at Roosevelt University, and won fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and Fulbright Scholar's program. His teaching and research fields included the history of the Holocaust, history of ideas, social movements, and nationalism. Stein believes it is important for students to understand that what happened to Jews in the Holocaust could happen to any group. "The Holocaust reminds us how important our human rights are and the terrible consequences of prejudice," he said. "People tend to forget that it happened only 70 years ago."

Stein played a major role in establishing Illinois as the first state in the nation to require all students in public elementary and secondary schools to be taught about the Holocaust; he created a state-wide curriculum for public schools and since enactment of the law on Jan. 1, 1990, has conducted scores of teacher training institutes that have provided more than 1,500 Illinois teachers with information about Holocaust education. The Roosevelt professor also has been a leader of the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, one of the most comprehensive museums of its kind in the nation. Located in Skokie, Ill., the museum was established in 1981 and Stein has been a board member since 1982.

**Michal Vyborny** is from Prague, Czech Republic. When he was fifteen, he started to focus on the history of the concentration camps when he visited Theresienstadt. His research focus is on the SS, camp guards and female guards. Apart from researching, in his

free time he loves fitness and kickboxing. He is finishing secondary school.

**Hana Waisserová** is an associate professor of practice and section head of Czech and Central European Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Department of Modern Languages and Literatures. She is also an affiliate of the Harris Centre for Judaic Studies. She earned a Ph.D. in Anglophone Transnational Literature from Palacký University in the Czech Republic and a Gender Graduate Certificate from Texas A&M University. She is the co-author of the book *Women's Artistic Dissent: Repelling Totalitarianism in Pre-1989 Czechoslovakia* (Lexington Books, 2023). She contributed to *Modern Czech Literature: Writing in Times of Political Trauma* (Vernon Press, 2024). She has published numerous articles on various topics, including South Asian and Central European women's transnational literature, women's totalitarian experiences, women dissidents and their activism, women Holocaust survivors and their testimonial literature, medieval Czech literature, and Czech-American culture in Nebraska.

**Adam Yunis** is currently pursuing his master's degree in Public History from Loyola University. Adam was the first indexer for this text and without his contributions the book would not have been possible. His main research interests include the Holocaust in France and post war Ukrainian nationalism in the United States and Canada. Yunis compiled and completed the entire index for this text. He also assisted Adelé-Marie and Naimola throughout the proofreading and editing process, checking facts, and offering suggestions. Yunis contributed several expert essays for the OER and found critical new evidence for one chapter that proved groundbreaking in what the new information proved.

Yunis currently works part-time as a Program Support Specialist and Assistant Reparations Coordinator for Holocaust Community Services. He has been with CJE since 2020, beginning as a volunteer working on reparations cases, and transitioning to the administrative staff. Adam has been involved in various Holocaust

education projects since high school and interned at the Illinois Holocaust Museum shortly after finishing university. In 2017, he received his bachelor's degree in International Studies and French from the University of Denver.

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